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**MIL • GLOBETROTTING
MASCARAS • TROUBLESHOOTER**

April 1980

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Wrestling

**HULK HOGAN:
"CRIPPLING,
DESTROYING,
WINNING ...
THAT'S WHAT I
DO BEST!"**

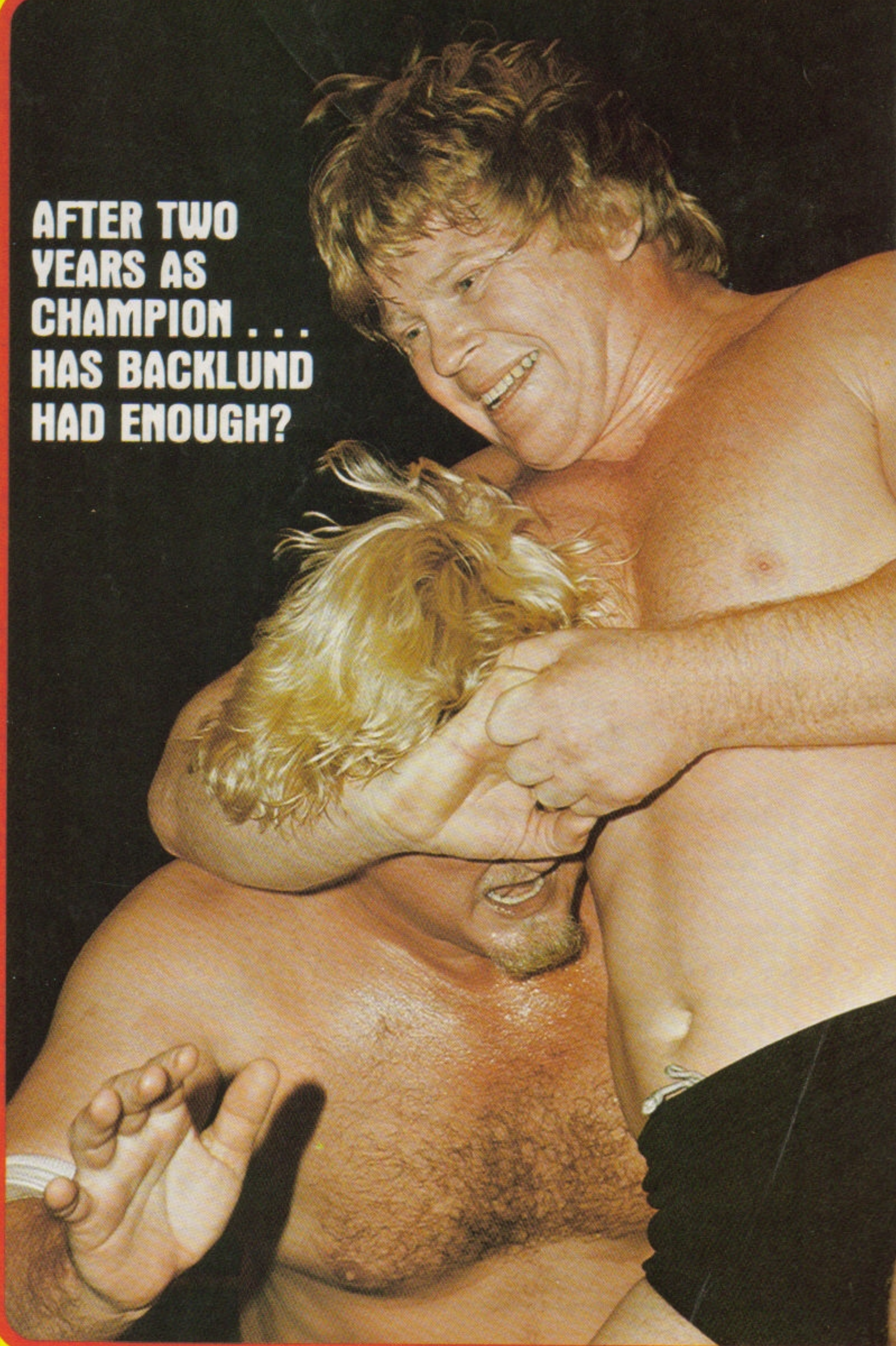


**WHY AWA
FANS HATE
TOMMY RICH**

**Dusty Rhodes and
Manny Fernandez:
WILL
HARLEY RACE
MAKE THEM
ENEMIES?**



**AFTER TWO
YEARS AS
CHAMPION ...
HAS BACKLUND
HAD ENOUGH?**



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Peter
King
Editor-in-Chief

On a recent trip to Richmond, Virginia, I was backstage at the Richmond Coliseum a few hours before the matches were due to start. In one dressing room I saw Greg Valentine limbering up in preparation for his match that night. My feelings about Valentine are well known. And his feelings about me are also no secret. So it was surprising when he stopped his excercises and walked over to me, a wide smile on his face.

"Let's let bygones be bygones," he said while putting his arm around my shoulder. Somehow, I felt like a small canary left alone with a hungry cat. But I'm a reporter first. So I asked Valentine what he wanted to talk about.

"I've got the makings of a great story for you, right here in my pocket," he said. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a neatly folded sheet of loose-leaf paper. "Here, my friend, take it," he all but purred. "Read it when you get the chance. It's all true. And you definitely have my permission to print it."

I walked away and unfolded the paper. The writing on it was almost a scribble, but I was able to read it with some effort. It hurled cnarge after charge at Ric Flair, once Valentine's closest friend, now his most hated enemy. Most of the accusations were unbelievable, libelous, or just plain obscene. Valentine must be a fool to think I'd print this piece of garbage.

Instead I showed it to Ric Flair. Flair's eyes turned cold as they scanned the piece of paper. When he finished reading, he looked up and said, "He'll pay for this." Flair's voice was cold. I had never seen him look so determined.

When Flair and Valentine wrestle, I fear it will be to the death.

ON THE ROAD

with
GARY MORGENSTEIN

MADISON
SQUARE GARDEN
NEW YORK CITY

MAPLE LEAF GARDEN
TORONTO

MINNEAPOLIS
AUDITORIUM
MINNEAPOLIS

THE SCOPE
NORFOLK

THE SUPERDOME
NEW ORLEANS

MID-SOUTH
COLISEUM
MEMPHIS

THE SPECTRUM
PHILADELPHIA

THE OLYMPIA
LOS ANGELES

THE KIEL
ST. LOUIS

COBOY HALL
DETROIT

THE SUMMIT
HOUSTON

THE OMNI
ATLANTA

MIAMI BEACH
AUDITORIUM
MIAMI

MOST UNITED FRONTS against a common wrestling enemy disintegrate quickly, usually at the first sign of trouble. Petty jealousies and old hatreds will splinter the movement and lead to a brawling free-for-all with the original purpose forgotten.

Jerry Lawler has changed all that. From all over America, wrestlers migrate in search of Lawler's arrogant figure. They share something in common: hatred. They want Lawler exterminated. I traveled to Memphis to investigate.

It's hard to dress for Memphis in the winter. Some days can be cold, others spring-like in their seductive warmth. I met Matt Brock the first night down there and was immune to any climactic conditions whatsoever. On the second night, I visited Bill Dundee, who has organized the anti-Lawler group.

"Jerry Lawler might be the most despised wrestler on Earth," said Dundee, leaning back in a heavy chair, eyes fixed and intent. "One thing everyone agrees upon is a wrestler must keep his word. He must be trustworthy. Lawler is a lying snake who'd stab anyone in the back to get ahead. I know."

Lawler and Dundee were once close friends. For months, they were tag team partners. Then a bitter disagreement ensnared them in a vicious match which forever ended their friendship.

"I tried to explain what happened, but Lawler wouldn't listen," Dundee said, his voice rippling with pain. "So we're enemies. He'll pay. I'll get him. Rather, we'll get him."

The "we" refers to three other wrestlers: Bobo Brazil, Bruiser, and AWA champion Nick Bockwinkel. For vastly different reasons, they all want Lawler destroyed.

"I hate ugly pretty-boys who think they're cute," said Bruiser. "Lawler combs the hair on his chest and thinks that makes him a champ. Well, he's a bum and me and my buddies are gonna clobber him."

"I'd like to butt Lawler's brains into extinction," said Brazil. "He did something to me I can never forgive. I won't rest until his body is splattered over the ring and into Arkansas."



Jerry Lawler's arrogant nature prompted three of the world's top wrestlers to form a coalition to plan his demise.

"That ignorant chimpanzee had the nerve to challenge me," said Bockwinkel. "Imagine something like that challenging me, the greatest champion who ever walked the Earth. He sent his challenge on a piece of brownish paper, his message scribbled in crayon."

"I bet that about sums up his intellectual prowess. The result of the match will demonstrate his wrestling abilities," Bockwinkel continued.

This four-member group has met on several different occasions. I was not permitted to attend any of the meetings, but Dundee described the most recent one.

(Continued on page 52)

TOP SECRET

Behind the Dressing Room Door

by Stu
Saks



I THOUGHT I was dreaming about a ringing telephone. Unfortunately, I was not. It was actually ringing. Surely my clock had stopped because the big hand was on the 12 and the little hand was on the nine. Unfortunately the second hand was moving, which generally means the clock is working. Okay, so it's nine (quick glance to see if the sun is shining), yes, in the morning and the phone is ringing. And it's my well-deserved day off.

This better be important. I picked up the receiver, but I guess I forget to say hello or something. "Stu," the voice said, "are you there, did I wake you?"

"No, no," I said in a voice that hardly concealed the fact that I had been sleeping. "I've been up for hours." I accidentally knocked the telephone off my dresser.

"Stu, Stu, are you awake," the voice said. "This is Natalie. Peter has to speak to you. It's very important."

The worst thing my boss' secretary ever did to me in the past was bring in sour milk for the coffee. Unless this was very important, the curdling coffee could be shoved right down the list.

"Stu," she said. "I'm putting Peter on."

"Stu," the voice was much deeper, so I figured Peter King, the editor of the magazine was on the line. "You've got to come in."

"What?"

"The deadline for INSIDE WRESTLING is the day after tomorrow and there's a story that has to be done that I think

(Continued on page 54)

THE INSIDER

By STEVEN FARHOOD

SCOOP OF THE MONTH

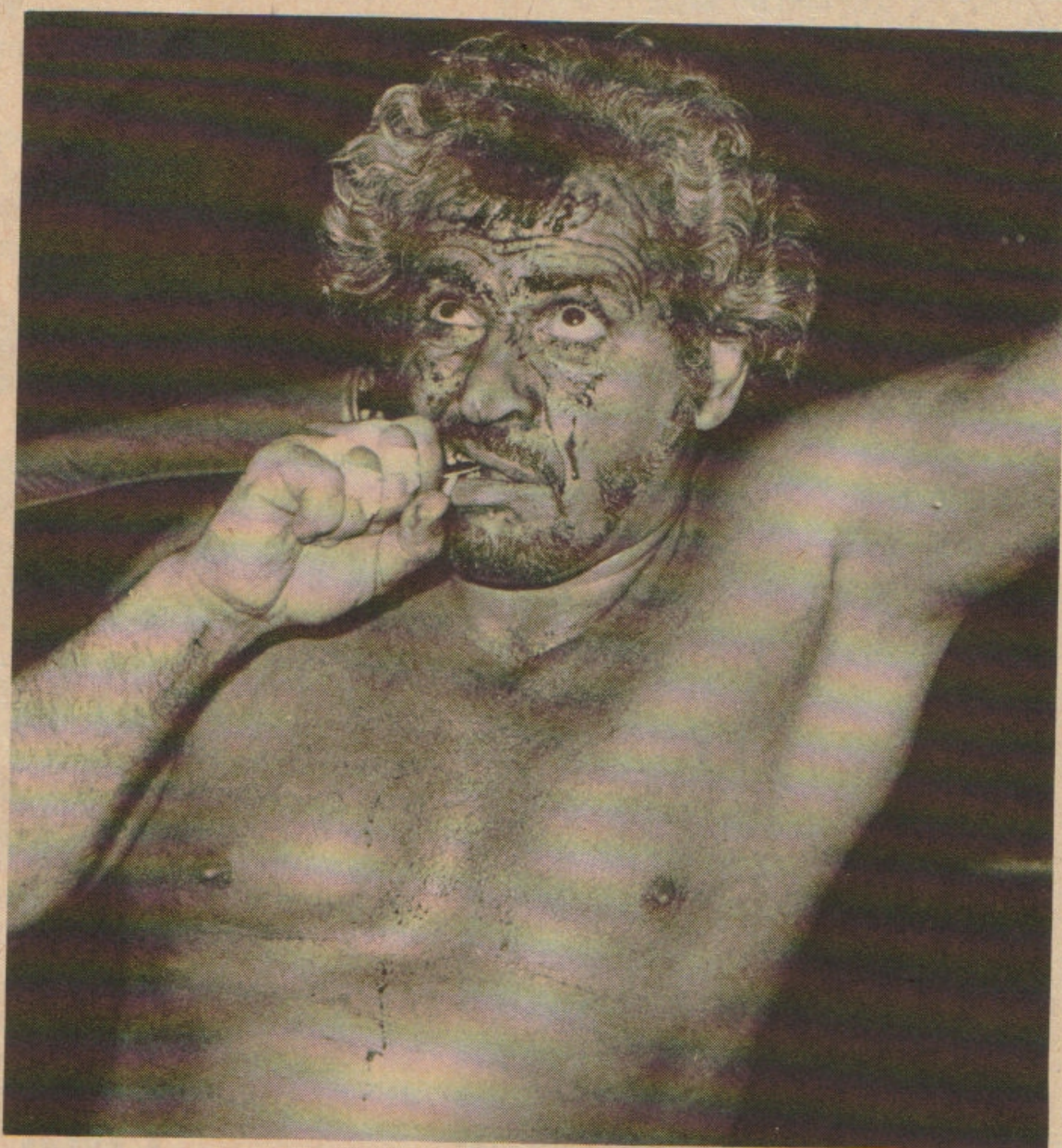
The Sheik has perfected a terrifying maneuver that is even more dangerous than his famed fire-throwing!

Reliable sources in Detroit insist The Sheik is almost ready to use his frightening maneuver for the first time in a professional match. Somehow, the mystic Arab wildman has learned to shoot a small amount of radioactivity from his fingertips into his opponent's face! For those who may not be familiar with radioactivity, let me just say that the end result of absorbing such rays would be crippling, to say the least.

The Sheik predictably has nothing to say on the subject. His interpreter, who answered my call in Detroit, had a brief statement.

"The Sheik does not wish to comment on the rumors circulating concerning his use of radioactivity. He will say, however, that when the time comes, all the people will find out whether or not the rumors are true. As Sheik has said before, he is capable of many mystical movements that the average human cannot comprehend. Thus, anything is possible."

The potential of the Sheik's power, assuming he is able to shoot radioactivity, is staggering. He would easily



Many have questioned the Sheik's sanity throughout the years. His ability to create fire in his fingertips has mystified fans, wrestlers, and federation officials who must decide whether he is suitable to remain in the sport. Now reports saying that he has acquired the ability to cast radiation from his fingertips has caused quite a stir.

gain control of the wrestling world within weeks. No one would dare enter the same ring. But let us not concede our great sport to this deranged animal yet. There are ways to stop him.

"I can't speak for the other two major alliances, but I know that we would probably immediately ban the use of

such a sadistic maneuver," NWA spokesman said.

"We've run into The Sheik before, and I don't doubt that he could do it. I don't know *how* he could do it, but no one knows how he throws fire either. Let's just hope we never have to make a ruling on this matter."

(Continued on page 56)

Body Slams & Pinfalls

By Dan Shocket



Dan Shocket predicts that the Samoans will easily defeat Ivan Putski and Tito Santana for the WWF tag team championship and eventually be recorded as the greatest team of all time.

IF THERE WAS any justice in the world, Lou Albano would be one of the most respected men in sports. Like Tom Landry in football or Earl Weaver in baseball, Albano would be recognized as a genius when it comes to understanding man's physical abilities. That's if there was any justice in the world.

Unhappily, Albano never gets that deserved respect. People dismiss his brilliant strategies as "dirty wrestling." Even though his tag teams have won the

WWF title many times, people refuse to acknowledge Albano's incredible wrestling intelligence. Today, he appears to be leading his new tag team, the Samoans, to championship victory. Once again, the fans will probably say, "Albano cheated."

I suppose it's asking too much of the fans' intelligence to appreciate the Samoans. This may be Albano's best tag team, ranking with the Valiants and Executioners. They move with a furious grace

that renders opponents helpless. While the Samoans seem to rely on brute force, Albano has actually directed their enormous strength to the best possible advantage. The best strategies are those that are almost invisible. Only looking back on it can

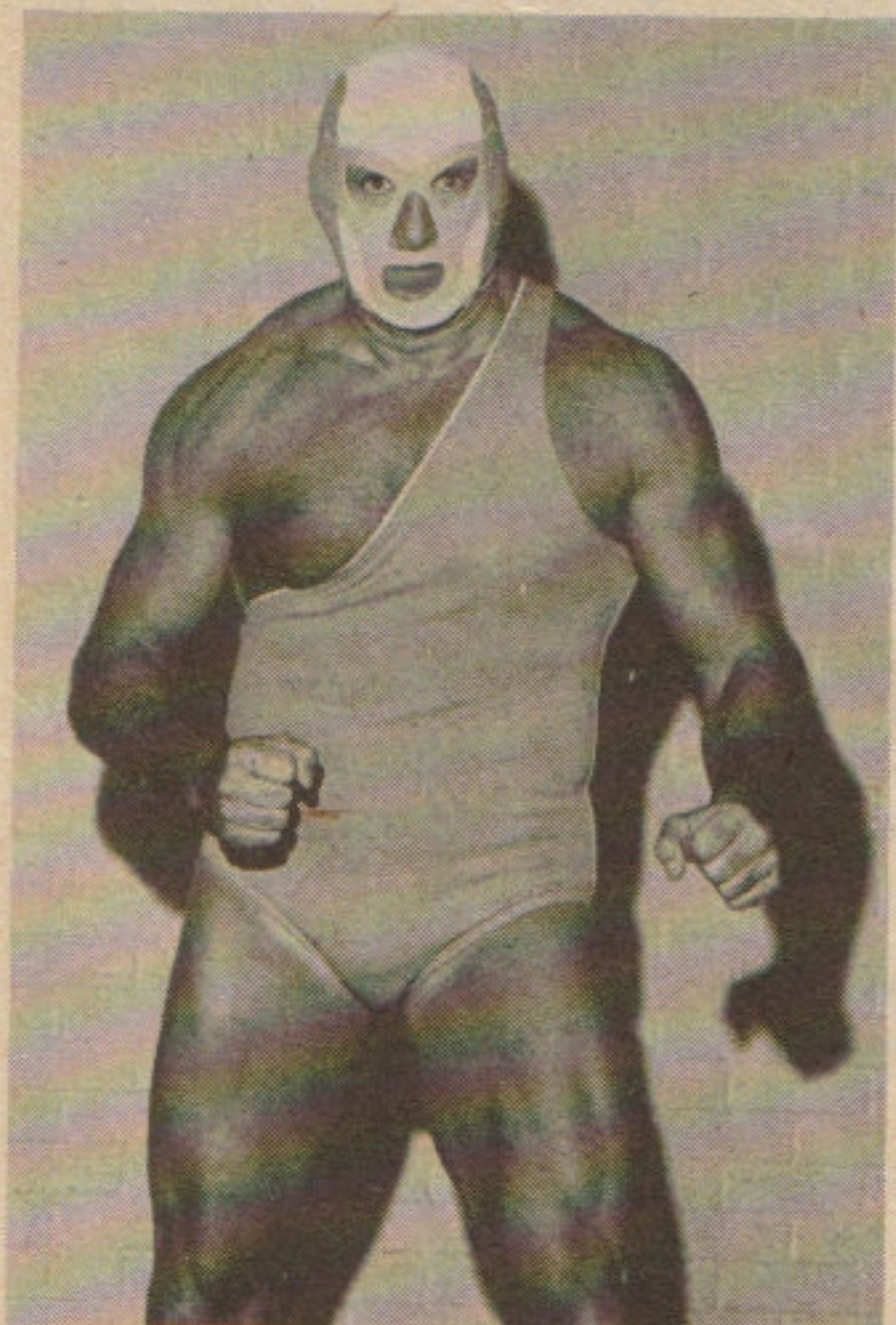
"It once bothered me. I know I'm the best. My strategies are studied and copied by everyone. Putski and Santana won the title using a strategy I developed for the Executioners. Chief Jay Strongbow copies Jim Valiant so much, I tell Jim to sue the bum for plagiarism. I've changed the face of tag team wrestling forever.

"The Samoans are probably my greatest achievement. Some may prefer the Mongols. Others will always remain fans of the Executioners. Both were great tag teams. My reputation as the greatest manager of all would be secure if I only managed them. But I'm getting better and better, smarter and smarter. The Samoans

(Continued on page 46)

NAMES MAKI

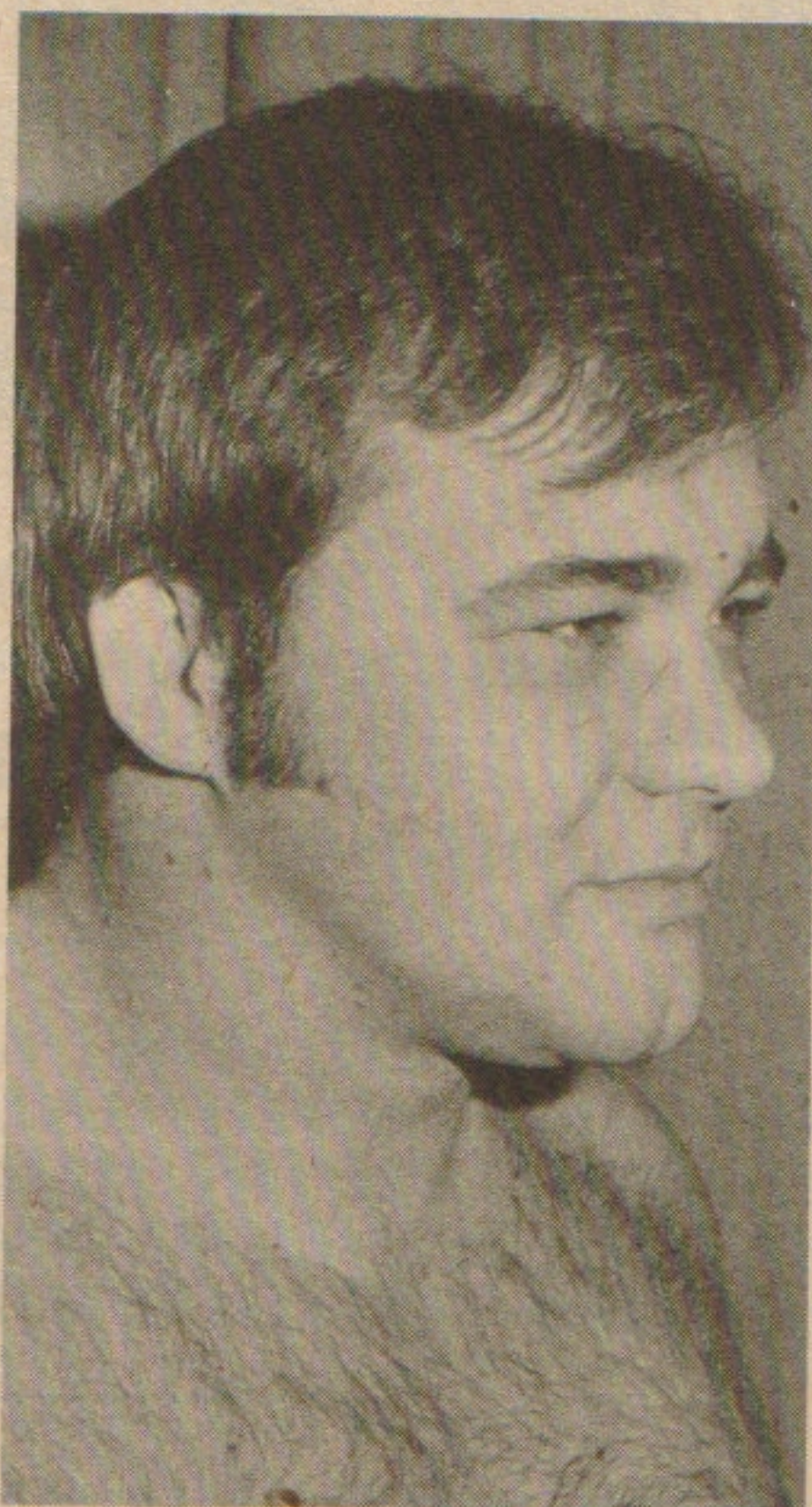
Due to lies told to me by a rulebreaker (whose name I can't reveal), I printed an incorrect item in one of my columns. I wrongly said that the popular AVENGER had been teaming with the hated ASSASSIN. It is not true. I apologize to AVENGER for ever believing he could stoop so low as to team with one of the sport's most maniacal rulebreakers. As for ASSASSIN, I have the feeling he tried to spread the rumor just to put a blot on the career of AVENGER. I will never trust the



AVENGER

source I received the information from again.

Here's some news that's really hard to understand: Young LARRY ZBYSZKO, the protege of BRUNO SAMMARTINO, says he wants to wrestle Bruno! There is no hatred involved on Larry's part as far as we have heard thus far. He just wants to wrestle Bruno. "I feel funny about this," says Bruno. "I don't want to



LARRY ZBYSZKO

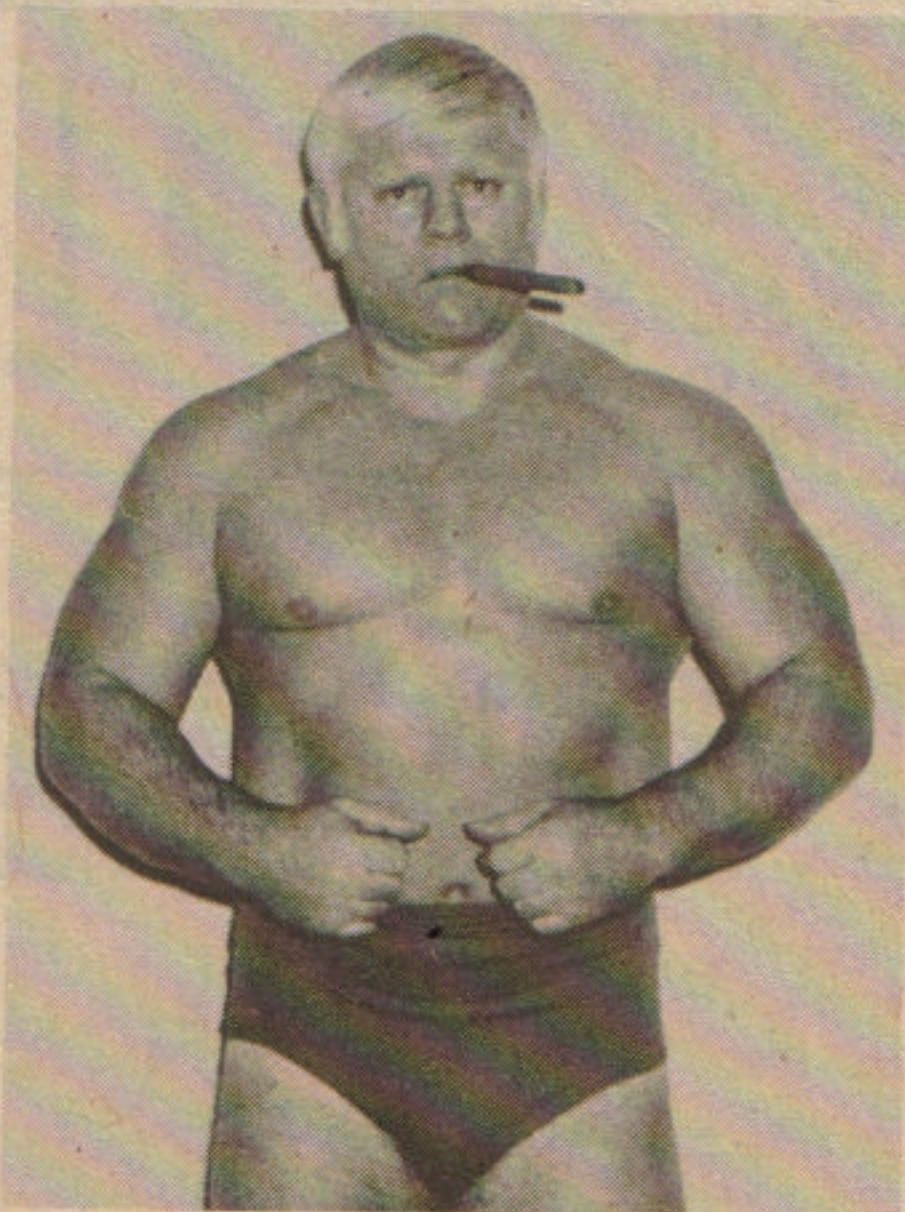
wrestle Larry. He is like a brother to me." We hear that Larry will pursue the matter until Bruno finally relents and gives Larry the match.

JIM BRUNZELL has regained the Mid-Atlantic heavyweight championship from RAY STEVENS. Rather than just going after Brunzell's title at the moment, Stevens seems to be more concerned with finding a tag team partner to help him win the NWA tag team belts from RICK STEAMBOAT and JAY YOUNG-BLOOD. At the present time Stevens is trying to form a duo with hated GREG VALENTINE . . . MASKED SUPERSTAR says that MR. WRESTLING II does not deserve a shot at the Georgia championship. "He hasn't beaten anyone but a bunch of stiff!"

Superstar claims. "After he beats someone of distinction, he can have a shot at my title."

DON DIAMOND is looking great in his Florida outings . . . GARY HART took his man MARK LEWIN to Detroit to challenge THE SHEIK . . . HULK HOGAN says that he will devour BOB BACKLUND in less than 10 minutes when they clash . . . IVAN KOLOFF and ALEXIS SMIRNOFF hold the Georgia tag team belts . . . BILL DUNDEE and JERRY LAWLER are far from settling their feud . . . CRUSHER moves into AWA number one contender position after a controversial victory over champion NICK BOCKWINKEL. Nick kept the belt but absorbed one of the most severe beatings of his life.

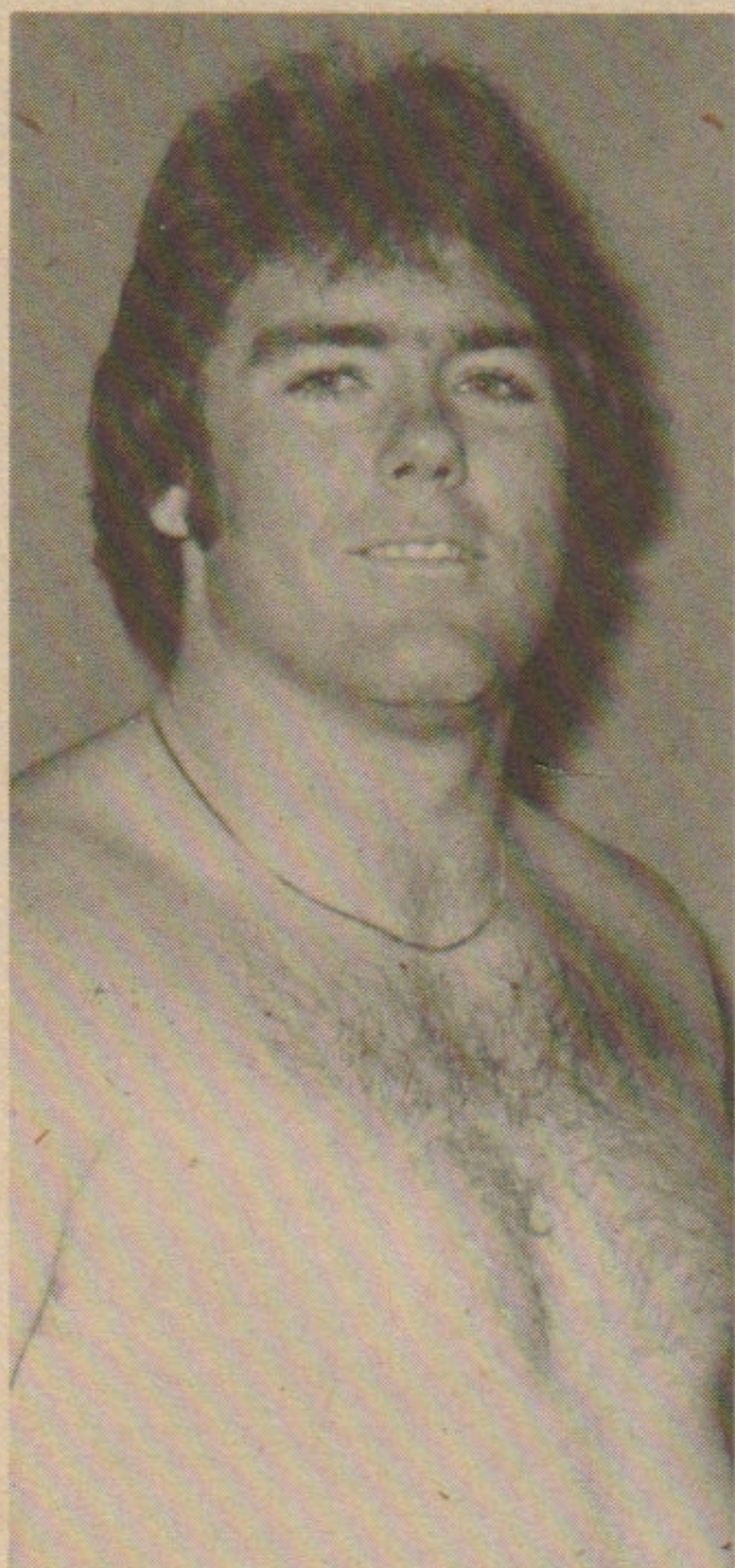
OLE ANDERSON is at war with former friend and partner ERNIE LADD. Anderson now teams with scientific wrestlers regularly and the Georgia fans have taken quite a liking to him



CRUSHER

N' NEWS

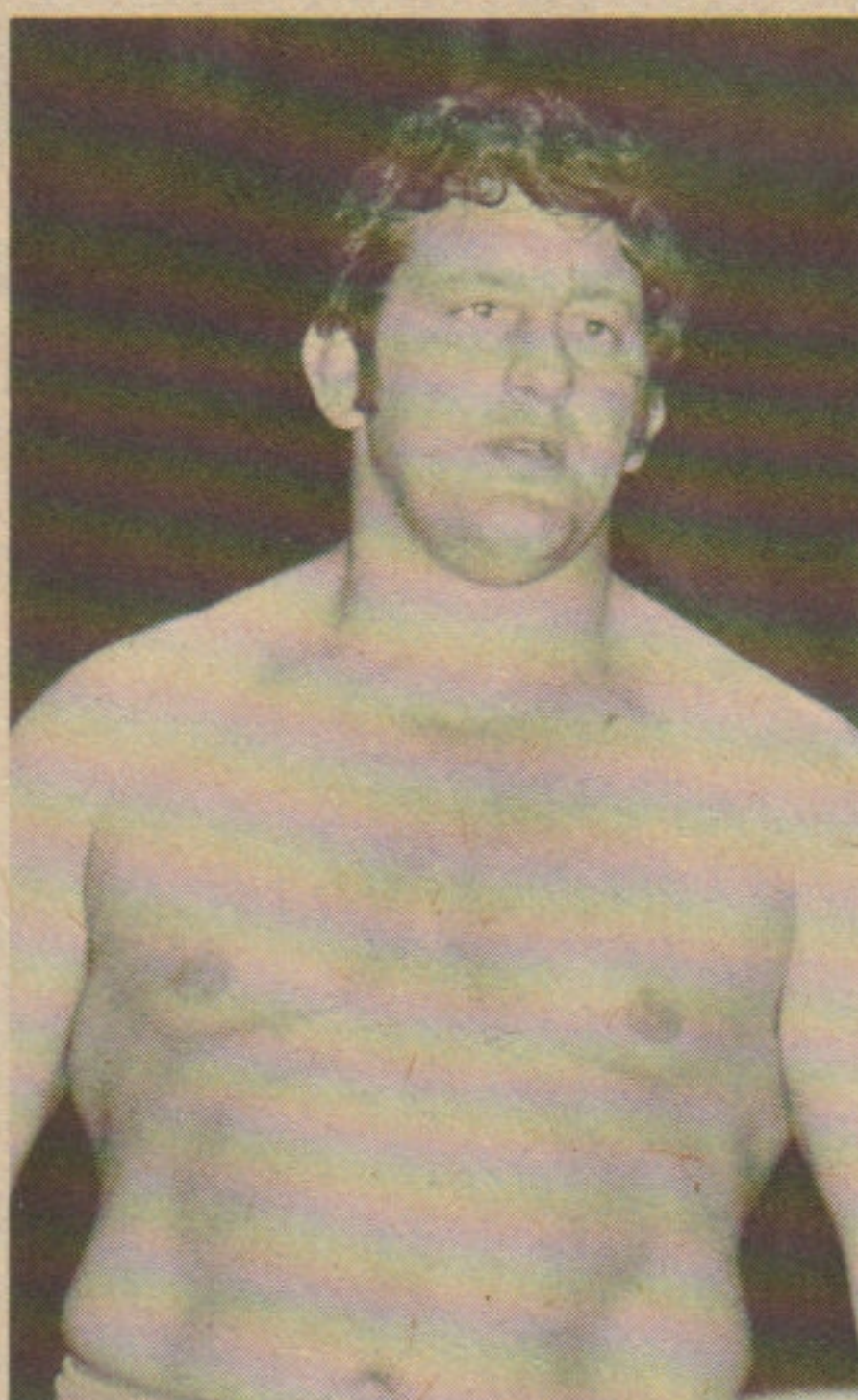
Bill Apter
reporting...



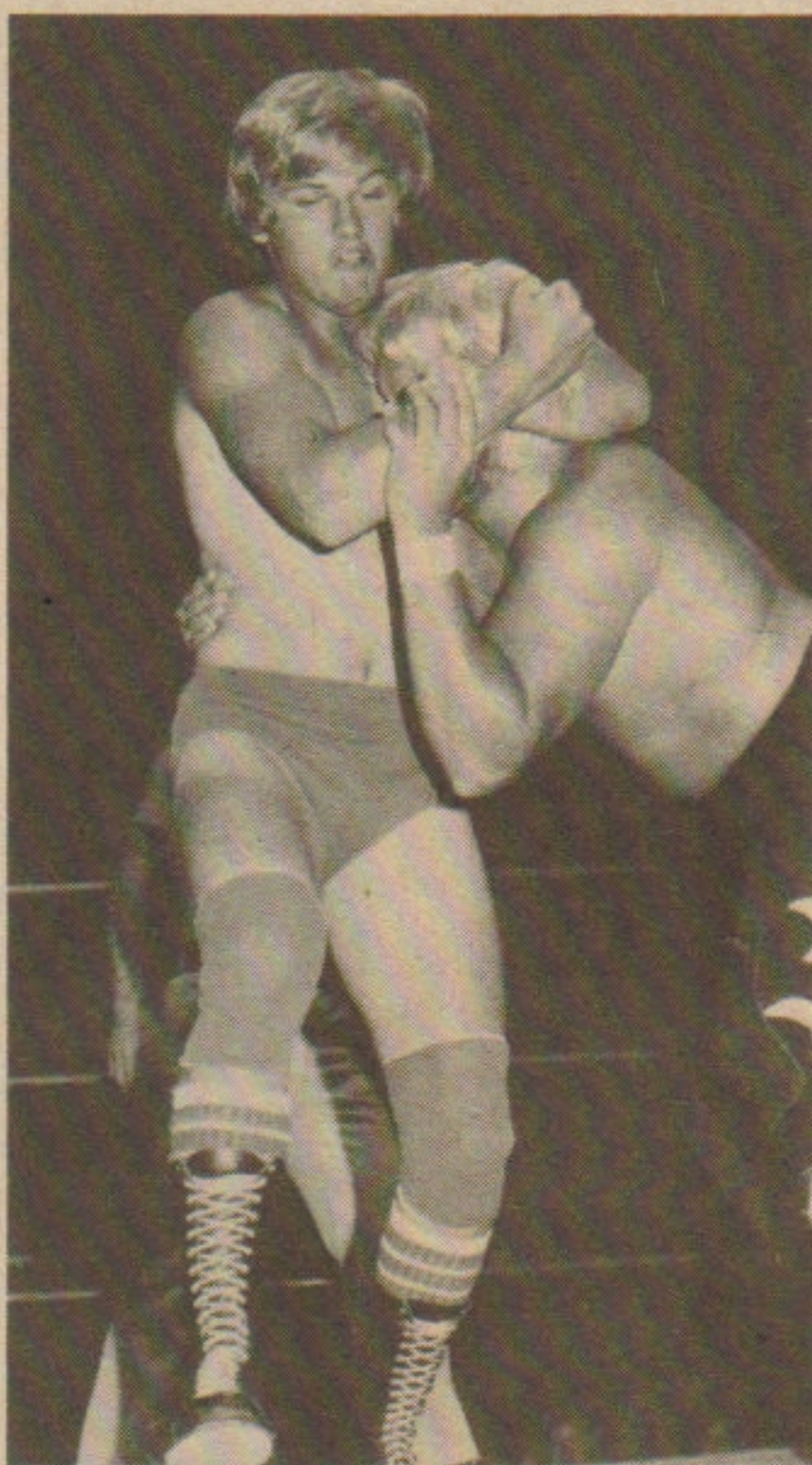
TULLY BLANCHARD

... RIP HAWK and DALE VALENTINE are teaming in Texas ... TOM JONES is chasing the Southwest title currently held by TULLY BLANCHARD. Tully has adopted rulebreaker tactics of late.

J.J. DILLION says his protege', KILLER BROOKS, wants to wrestle NWA champion HARLEY RACE ... JESSE VENTURA claims that he is not satisfied with his AWA matches. "All they throw me are losers and more losers," he says. "I am tired of beating up VERNE GAGNE. I am tired of beating up GREG GAGNE. And I am tired of beating up BILLY ROBINSON. Give me some competition or else!"



BILLY ROBINSON



EDDIE GILBERT

Blond GINO HERNANDEZ says his new name—legally—will be "Gorgeous Gino." "It fits me so well," he sighs ... JOHNNY RIVERA is looking good after recovering from an injury in a brutal WWF match ... RIC FLAIR says that he and RICK STEAMBOAT have worked out some new maneuvers to help cripple GREG VALENTINE. I bet you never thought you'd read that!

NIKOLAI VOLKOFF has invaded Florida and is concentrating on getting a match



NIKOLAI VOLKOFF

against Florida champion MANNY FERNANDEZ ... EDDIE GILBERT has won 35 straight matches in the past few weeks ... TED Di BIASE is doing well in Oklahoma ... Coco butt expert BOBO BRAZIL is looking forward to returning to New York soon ... MIL MASCARAS wants to bring his brother DOS CARAS to the WWF.

That's all for now. See you next time! □



Matt Brock's **PLAIN SPEAKING**

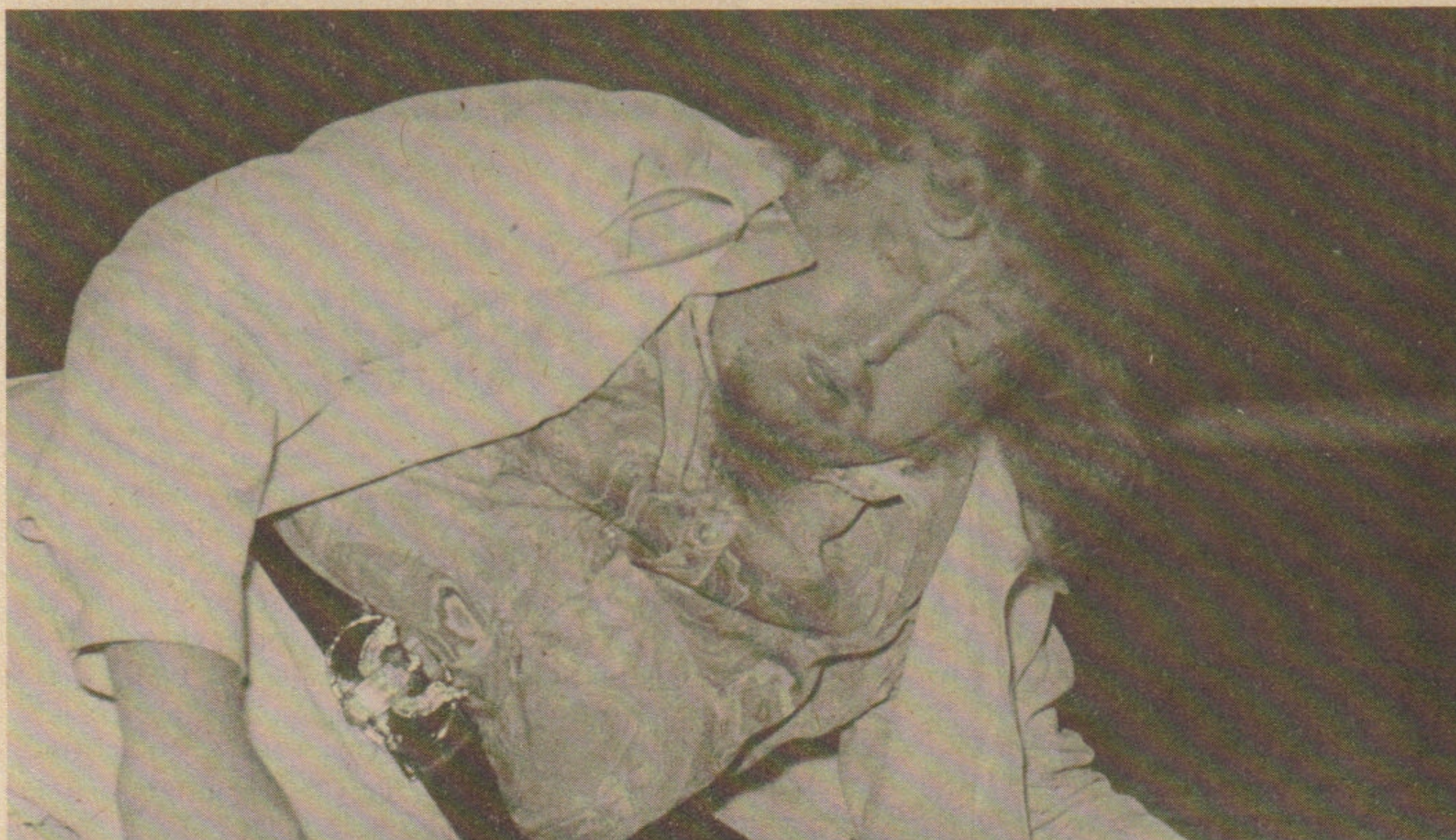
PORTLAND, OREGON: Nothing like a warm fire, a cool drink, and an old friend to keep away the damp Northwest winters. Had a chance to visit with a good friend, Stan Stasiak. Up here in the lovely woods, Stasiak is a popular figure. He's a local boy. But once Stasiak ventures beyond this area, fans tend to boo him. We talked a liter's worth about that strange attitude. Stasiak insists he's still the most aggressive wrestler around and can't really account for the almost violent disparity. I can. Stasiak is an extreme sort of fellow. It's either-or with him, generally *or*. He doesn't know how to ease up. Stasiak goes full throttle all of the time. He's been known to pulverize an opponent, then offer him a hand out of the ring. That's how he is. A tough gentleman. But fans don't understand his complexities. Should the public ever see Stasiak for what he truly is, a rough, talented man with a good heart, "The Man" might become one of the most popular wrestlers. Everywhere.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA: Fans here were teased by Mil Mascaras' brief appearance. I'm here for the warm weather. Got caught in a howling snowstorm up north and spent a night in this remote cabin. Just me, an old logger named Joe, and a bottle of Scotch. Spent the first hour warily staring until we realized we had something in common. Wrestling. The old guy was a wrestling fan. Soon as I told him what I do for a living, he went berserk. Started pumping me for info on all the guys. Learned he was a big Victor Rivera fan. When I told him what a dirty fink Rivera had become in the WWF, Joe started screaming and swearing. Guess when you love a wrestler, you'll never accept them turning bad. Worst part, it was Joe's bottle. Also took the radio into his room. Spent the remainder of the night humming big band songs and watching the snow cover my window.



MIL MASCARAS

Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist. Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor



SIR OLIVER HUMPERDINK

TAMPA, FLORIDA: Bad Bad Leroy Brown looks like a pile of uncooked pumpnickel dough. He's the hottest thing in Florida now, though I wasn't impressed. He moves like yesterday's orange marmalade, if you get my drift. His manager, Sir Oliver Humperdink, who might have a chin under his beard, knew how I felt about Brown. In spite of that, Humperdink brings Brown over to my lounge chair. There I am, drying out and squinting at the bikinis, when this bald gallop grunts at me. Humperdink shakes my shoulder. I don't look up, merely raise my empty glass, thinking it's the waiter. Brown takes the glass and breaks it, then eats the shards. When I asked if he could sing Mr. Bojangles, he tipped over my lounge chair. Still puzzled, I asked Bozo and Boffo what their story was. Humperdink says he's tired of creeps like me insulting his wrestler. I say I don't like people eating my glass before I've gotten the olive, and

stood, preparing to leave. Brown blocks my path. Trouble was brewing. Apparently Brown hadn't heard of my courage, war hero and all that. Nor was he prepared for my next move. I screamed for help, drawing several waiters to my side. A potentially ugly confrontation in which Brown would have been soundly whipped was aborted. Still insist he's a bum.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK: Sitting idly in my apartment one eveing and flicked on the old television. Suddenly, I'm greeted with wrestling from Argentina. If you fans have never seen *Luche Libre* from Argentina, you're missing something. My personal favorite is Pipino the Clown. An obvious fan hero, as much for his style as for the balloons he gives out, Pipino exemplified the dignified manner in which Argentinian wrestlers comport. Definitely something to see. □

HOTSEAT

HULK HOGAN: "CRIPPLING, DESTROYING, WINNING . . . THAT'S WHAT I DO BEST!"

NO WRESTLER IN recent memory has excited the public like this hulk of a man. Thousands of adoring letters have poured into our offices. This is unprecedented. But a careful examination of the man shows why he is so popular. His physical dimensions are awesome. Standing 6-8, weighing 300 pounds, all of it muscle. Clear eyes stare back in bemused contempt at a world he believes is rightfully his. Blond hair frames a tanned, handsome face. His swift, powerful strides can cover a ring and smother an opponent. His huge arms can crush a foe into a crippled, helpless hulk. He enjoys destroying opponents. He is the incredible Hulk Hogan.

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED
BY DAN SHOCKET

Q: Sir, welcome to the Hotseat. Rest assured you have a friend here.

A: I appreciate that, Dan.

Q: Why do you think you're so popular?

A: Because I'm wonderful.

Q: Could you be more specific?

A: I'm wonderful, gorgeous,

strong, smart, tough, mean, great. That enough?

Q: For the moment.

A: You a wise guy?

Q: Yes. How'd you get started in wrestling?

A: I've been wrestling for years. Everyone's heard of me. That's why Fred Blassie brought me to the WWF.

“

Take those short, squat ugly dumplings that litter the WWF. A guy like Putski, you think I care what a misshapen goose-head like him says?

”

Q: What was the first thing Blassie said to you?

A: (Chuckling) Freds said, "How'd you like to bust up some lame pencil-necked geeks and drive around in a Rolls Royce?"

Q: Do you find the competition easy?

A: Oh, not that there ain't some awful mean dudes in the WWF. I've taken my licks, mainly 'cause I'm too honest. I don't have to break the rules like the other clods do. They have no talent. I do. I wrestle fair and square and good.

Q: Some would say otherwise.

A: They're jealous. Take those short, squat ugly dumplings that litter the WWF. A guy like Putski, you think I care what a misshapen goose-head like him says? Putski is ugly and jealous 'cause I'm gorgeous. So what he says don't matter one little bit.

Q: Are there any WWF wrestlers you respect?

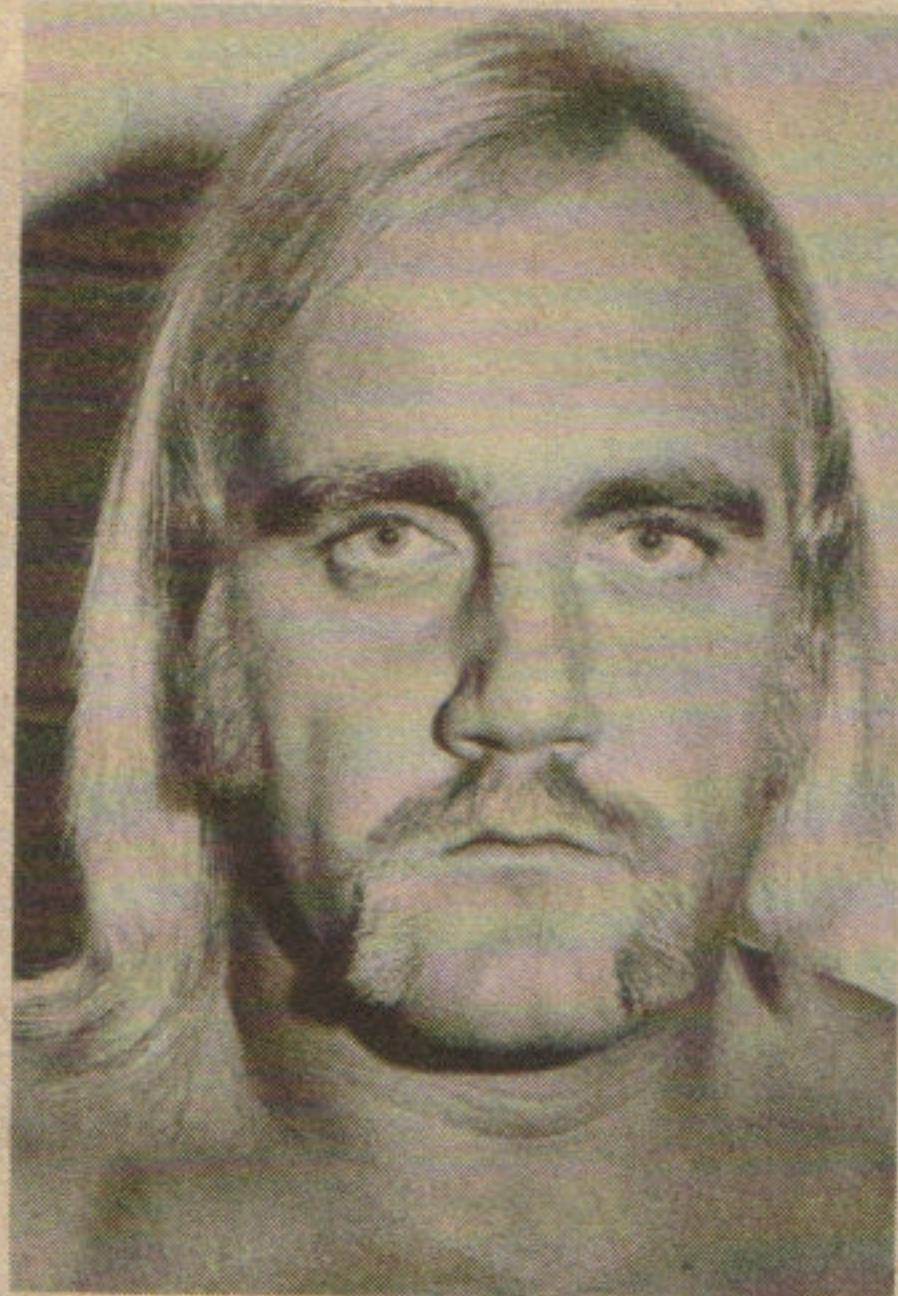
A: Persons or ability?

Q: Both. First personalities.

A: Well, I think the Samoans have fine minds and characters. They are tough and know what it's like to rumble in the jungle, so they got guts.

Q: Courage seems to be an important character trait to you.

A: Without guts, a man's got nothin'. If you don't have guts, you're always afraid,



“

Without guts, a man's got nothin'. If you don't have guts, you're always afraid, always scared to take a chance and make a move.

”

always scared to take a chance and make a move. Guts is more than absorbin' a beatin' in the ring. You gotta have the guts to even go out there. You think it's easy to go out there and face some animal like Ted DiBiase?

Q: Then how important are the fans?

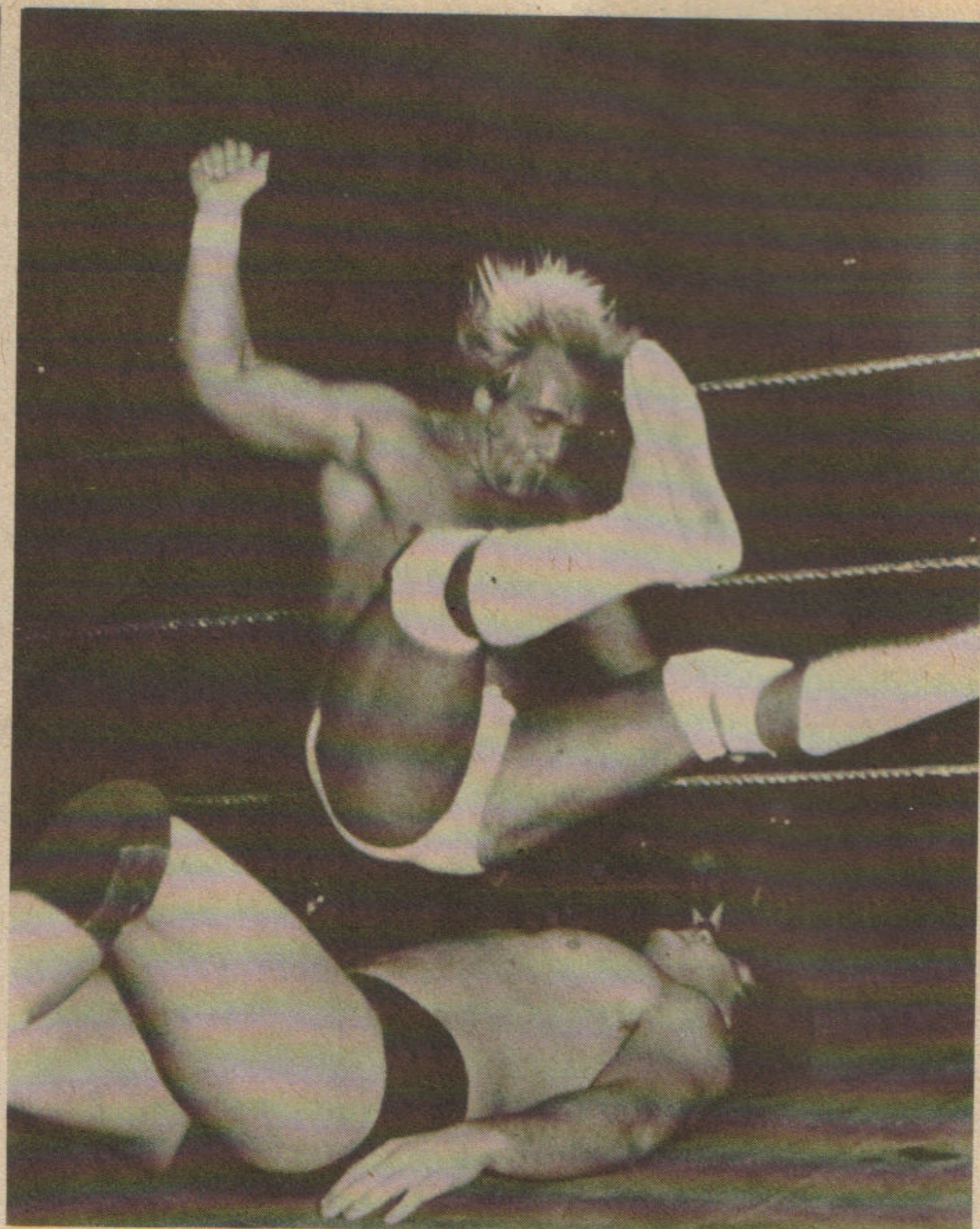
A: The ones that like me are great. The other one percent can sleep with the fishes in Lake Erie.

Q: You're especially popular with the female fans.

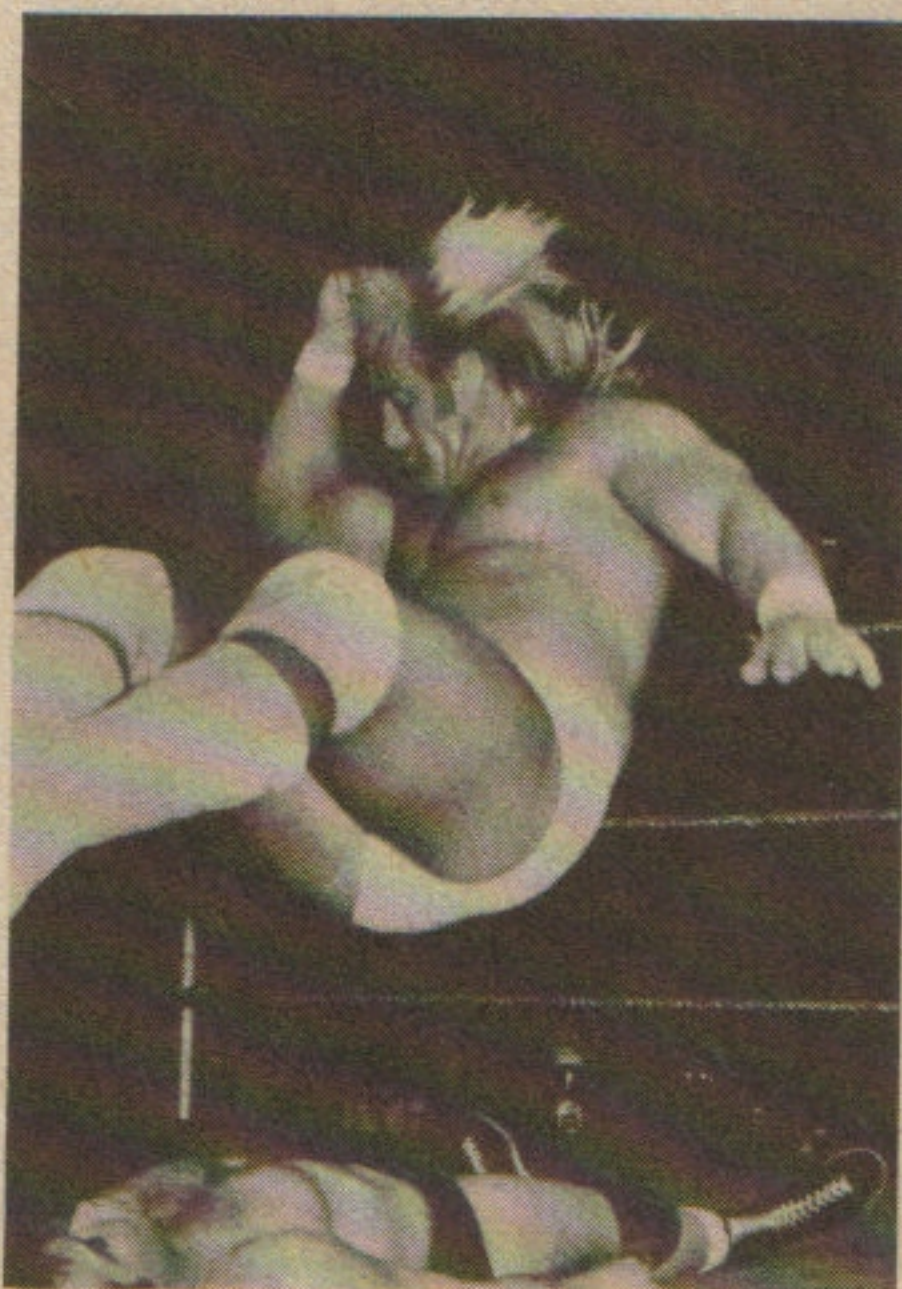
A: Naturally. All sex symbols are popular with the ladies.

Q: Is that how you see yourself, as a sex symbol?

A: A part of me, sure. I'm the best-lookin' guy I've ever seen. But I ain't no air-head. I got more goin' for me than big



Hulk Hogan leaps high into the air to increase the pressure of his seat drop on Ted DiBiase's chest (above). The Hulk follows that maneuver with a flying elbow smash (below).



muscles and a beautiful face, deep tan, and all that. I got intelligence and determination.

Q: And that distinguishes you from the rest?

A: Rest of what?

Q: Wrestlers.

A: Oh, yeah.

Q: Whose talents do you respect?

A: Not many. Bockwinkel ain't bad. He's almost as smart as me.

Q: To what do you owe your enormous wit?

A: What?

Q: Your wit, sir.

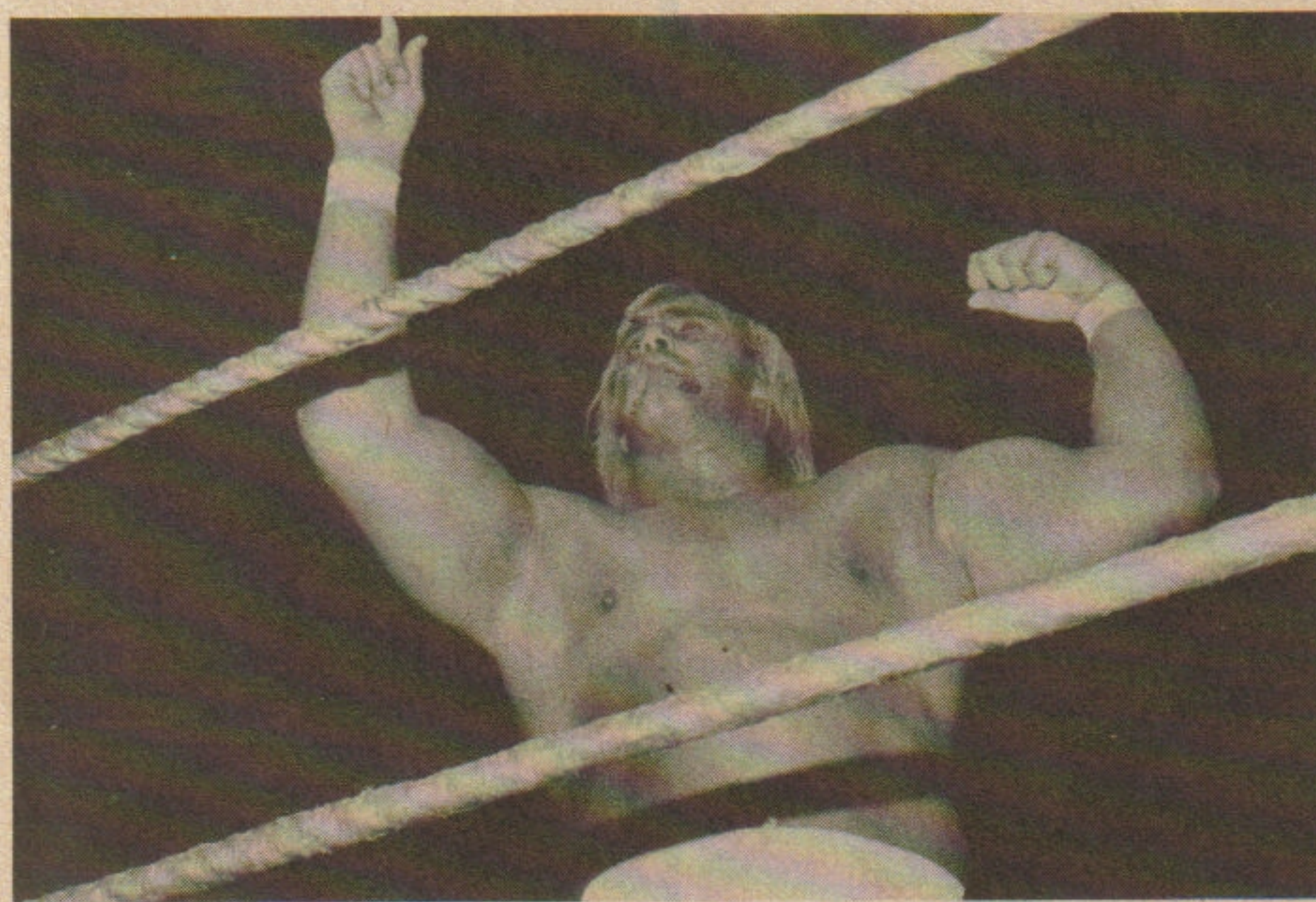
A: What about it?

Q: Never mind. You'd like Bob Backlund's belt, wouldn't you?

A: Backlund's belt don't mean a cat's whiskers unless it's covered and drippin' with his blood. That's how I want



Hulk Hogan is very concerned with his appearance and he wants to make sure everybody realizes he has large muscles. Hogan's manager, Fred Blassie, points to Hulk's 24-inch arms (above). Hogan takes time out during a match to let the fans know who is number one (below).



Backlund's belt.

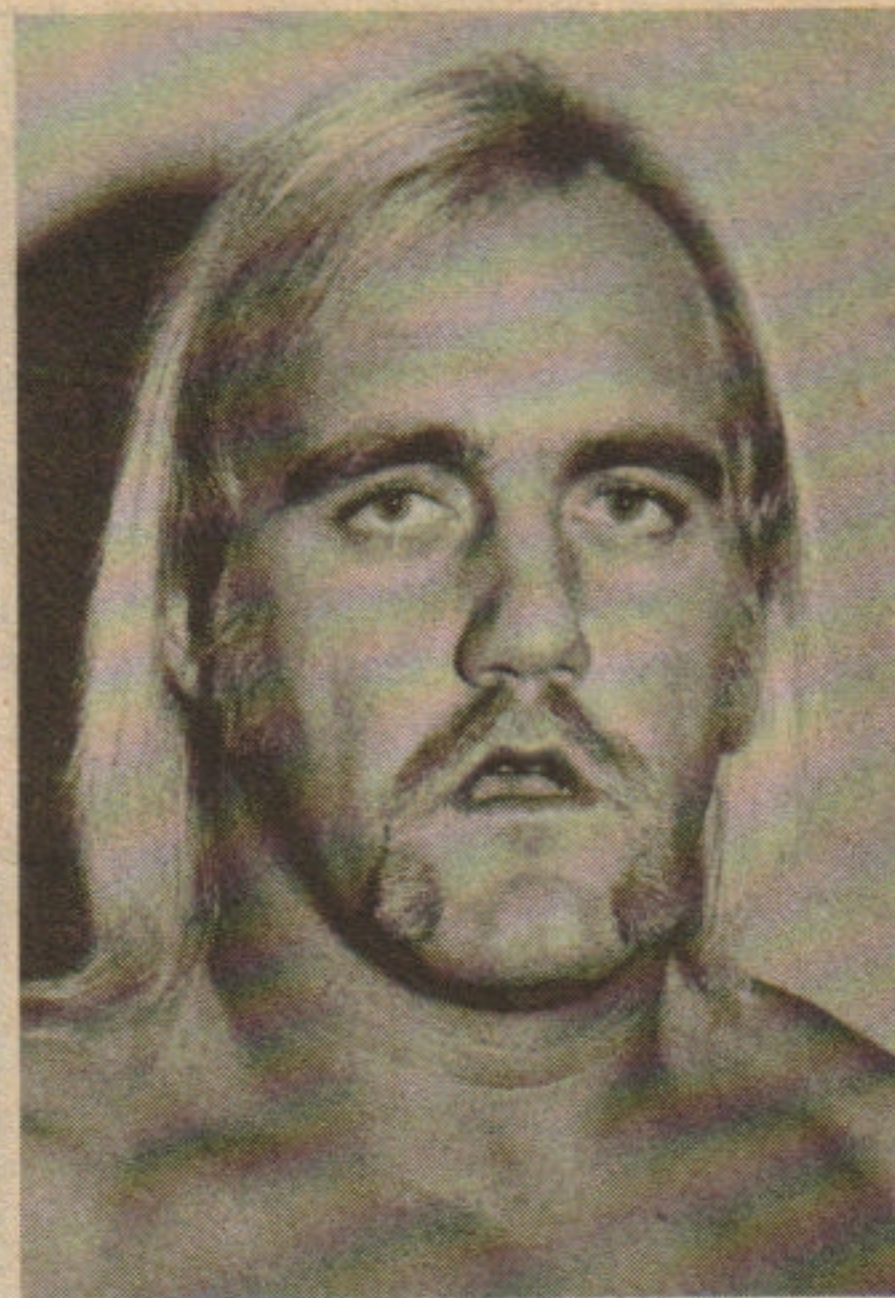
Q: You have some people to get past.

A: Bums. The WWF is full of bums. Freddie tells me not to worry, he's got it all figured out. I'll be champion in six months, maybe sooner if that yellow-bellied Backlund will give me the shot. In fact,

Blassie told me I might not even have to wrestle Backlund to get the belt.

Q: How's that?

A: You know what kind of genius Blassie is. He said Arnold Skoaland, the bobo who's Backlund's manager, called Fred and said that Backlund is so scared to wrestle me, he'll



“
The WWF is full of bums. Freddie tells me not to worry, he's got it all figured out. I'll be champion in six months, maybe sooner if that yellow-bellied Backlund will give me the shot.
”

give me the belt if I promise not to hurt him.

Q: Really?

A: Blassie would never lie to me. He's my friend.

Q: How thoroughly does he prepare you for each match?

A: We go over each thing that might come up without me losin' any spark. You gotta have spark or else you're nothin'.

Q: If you had one line to describe your talents, what would it be?

A: Crippling, destroying winning . . . that's what I do best!

Q: Sir, it has been a pure delight seeing a young man like you eager to win.

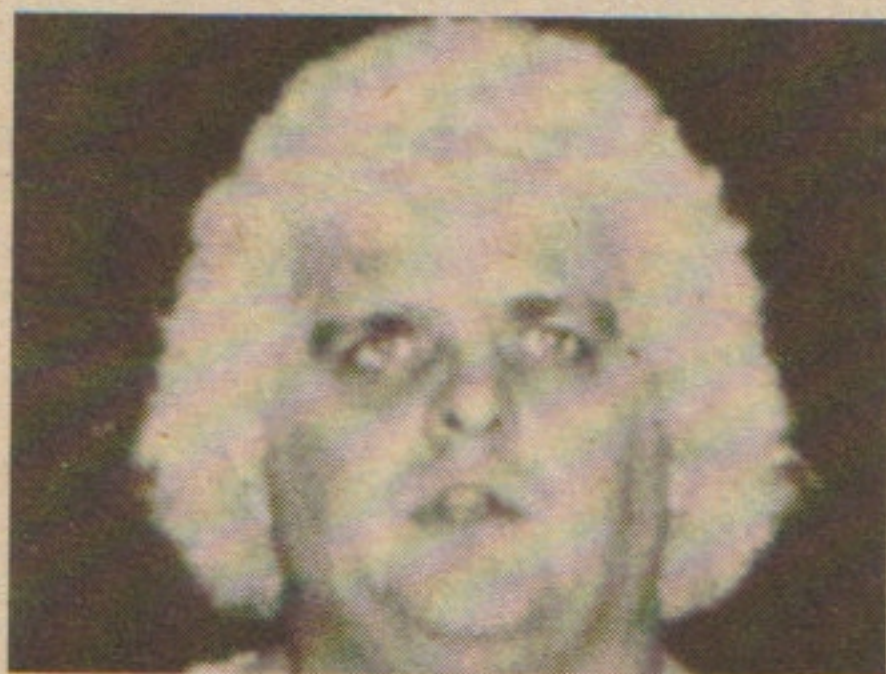
A: Dan, I want to give my love to all those wonderful ladies. Keep them cards and letters comin' right in. I read 'em all. □

NEWS FROM THE

If you would like your area of the country represented in these reports, while also being officially credited with your own by-line, send us reports of the matches you attend. You will have the thrill of seeing your name in an internationally known magazine while at the same time helping to improve the quality of wrestling in your area. So why not give it a try? You will be glad you did!

Send your reports to: Correspondent Editor, Box 48, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11571.

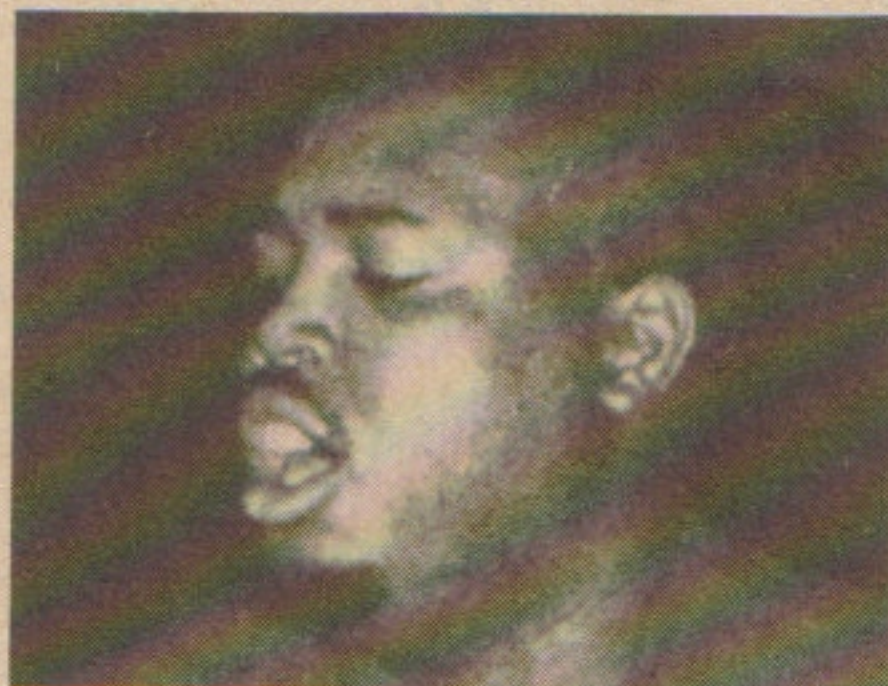
MIAMI, FL By Neal G. Blaustein



DUSTY RHODES

vs.

BAD BAD LEROY BROWN



The event was an exciting Southern heavyweight title match between challenger Dusty Rhodes and champion Bad Bad Leroy Brown. Reluctantly, Rhodes had to use rulebreaking tactics to counter those of Brown. The result was one of Miami's most memorable bloodbaths. More action took place out of the ring than within. At one point the referee got in the middle of the melee and was rendered unconscious for a few minutes. During that time, the intensity of the action brought the arena security guards to the alert. When the referee finally awoke and caught a glimpse of the action, he disqualified both wrestlers.

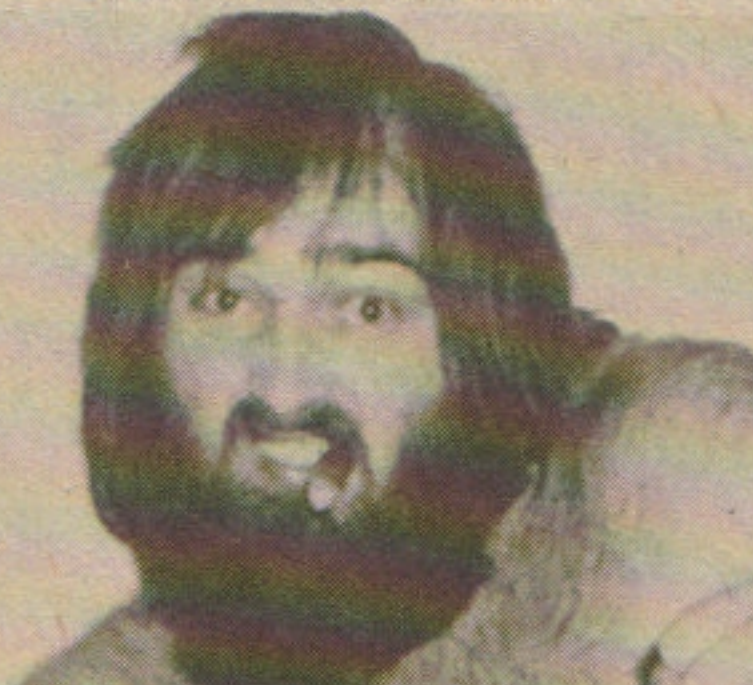
FORT WORTH, TX By Shawn Hodges



KEVIN VON ERICH

vs.

TIM BROOKS



Metroplex fans received a really special holiday treat when Kevin Von Erich squared off against Tim Brooks. Young Kevin demonstrated a mature courage in consistently eluding Brooks' monstrous swipes. Midway through the bout, Brooks brought a foreign object into the ring. Luckily, Kevin disarmed Brooks and chased the cowardly rulebreaker around the ring before eventually catching him for a well-earned triumph.

OTHER BOUTS: Fritz and David Von Erich topped Mark Lewin and Gary Hart . . . Kerry Von Erich upended Skandor Akbar . . . Sweet Brown Sugar upended Bull Ramos . . . Les Thornton drew with Jonathan Boyd.

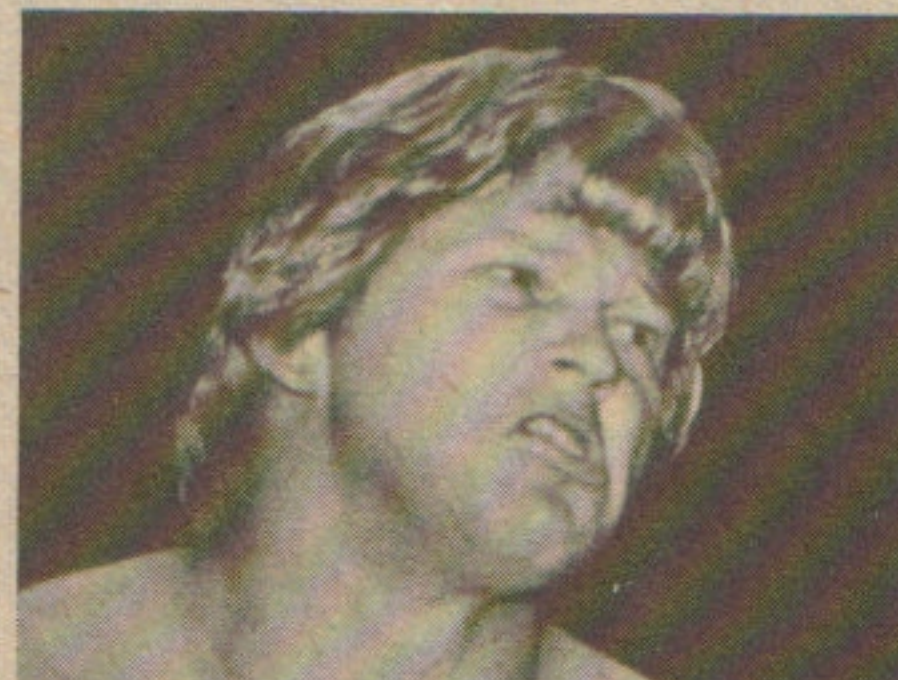
NEW YORK, NY By Adam Walker



BOB BACKLUND

vs.

BOBBY DUNCUM



Big Bad Bobby Duncum challenged WWF champion Bob Backlund in a Texas death match. Backlund delighted the cheering crowd with a series of brilliant scientific maneuvers. Duncum saw he couldn't win fairly, so he started cheating. One result was that Duncum tossed Backlund out of the ring. When Backlund managed to get back in, he hit Duncum with his shoulder and covered him for the win.

OTHER BOUTS: NWA champ Harley Race beat a bloodied Dusty Rhodes . . . WWF tag team champs Tito Santana and Ivan Putski stopped Swede Hanson and Victor Rivera . . . Antonio Inoki removed Hussein's Arab's boot . . . Pat Patterson bested Dominic DeNucci

WRESTLING CAPITALS

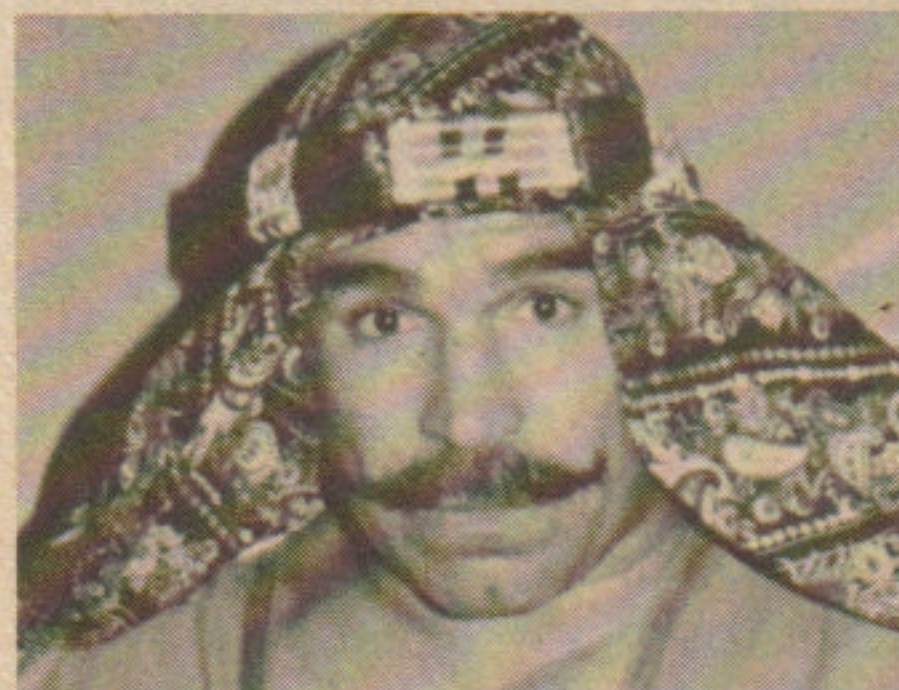


MERIDEN, CT

By Darlene Gagne



IVAN PUTSKI
vs.
HUSSEIN ARAB



An hour time limit bout between Ivan Putski and Hussein Arab turned into a brutal 15-minute war. Hussein greeted Putski with a chokehold which he applied with his robe. Putski seized the robe, tossed it aside and delivered a succession of devastating punches. Shaken, Arab ran out of the ring and back to the dressing room, giving the match to Putski by disqualification.

OTHER BOUTS: Pete Doherty barely beat Frank Williams . . . Tito Santana put away Dave Darrow . . . Johnny Rivera and Jose Estrada drew . . . Bob Duncum brass-knuckled Ted DiBiase.

LOS ANGELES, CA

By David Tornek



MIL MASCARAS
vs.
VICTOR RIVERA



The Main event at Olympic Stadium was a hair vs. mask match between Victor Rivera and Mil Mascaras. If Mascaras lost, he'd have to unmask. If Rivera lost, he'd have to have his hair cut. Since a lot was at stake, the bout was hot and furious. Sensing defeat, Rivera started using all sorts of dirty tricks. But each time, Mascaras overcame the illegal holds and managed to gain a victory. Rivera had his hair cut while the fans cheered.

OTHER BOUTS: Twin Devil drew with Al Madril . . . Mando Guerrero and Carlos Mata defeated Bull Ramos and Colosso Colosetti.

MARSHFIELD, WI

By Scott Petterson



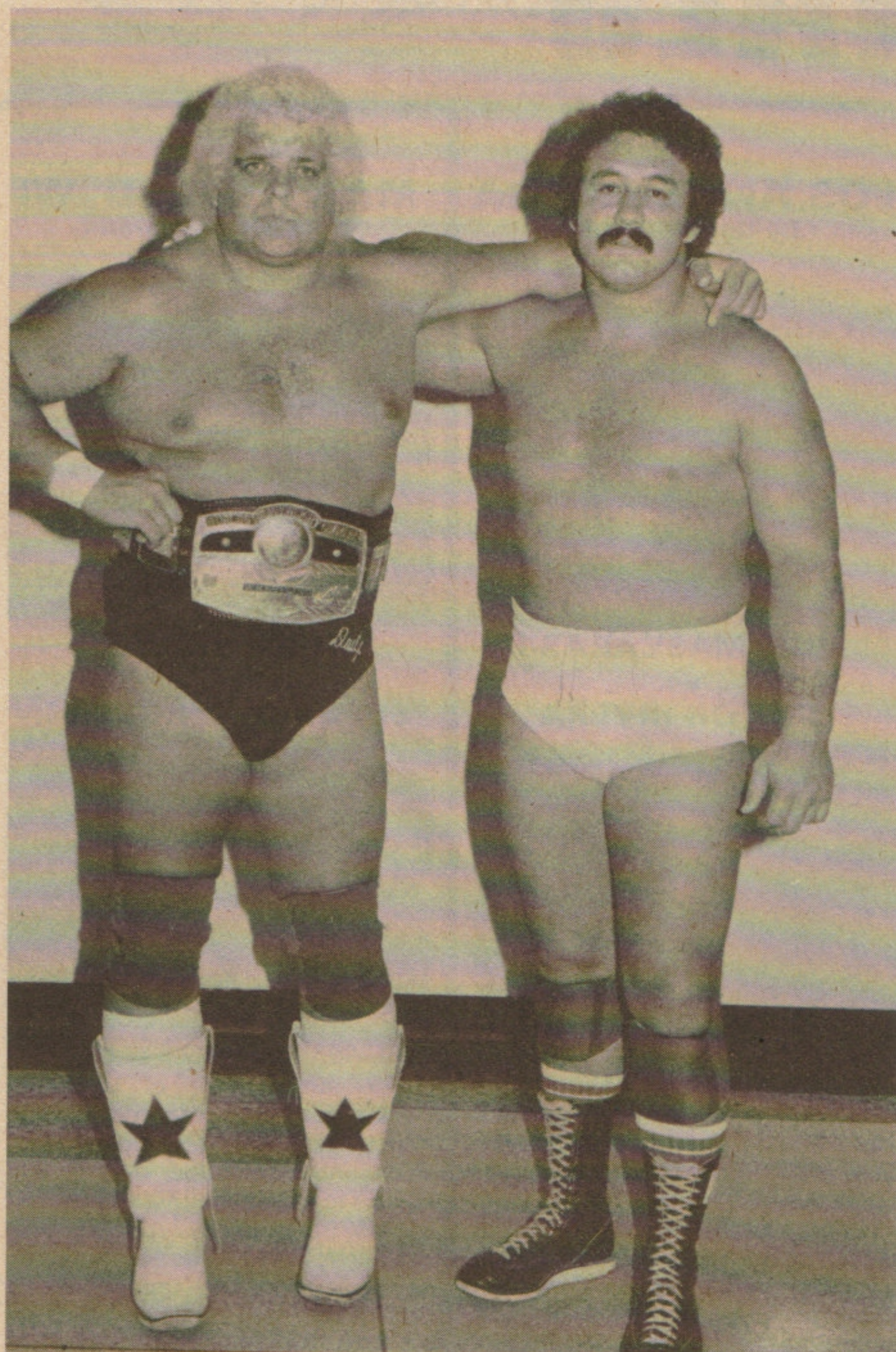
DINO BRAVO
vs.
SUPER DESTROYER II



An exciting night of wrestling culminated in a heated grudge match between sensational Dino Bravo and hated Super Destroyer II. Forced to wrestle without his mask, Il was irate at the opening bell. However, Bravo wasn't bothered as he ripped off the tape covering Destroyer's face and whipped the big man from pillar to post to score an impressive victory.

OTHER BOUTS: Lord Al Hays and Super Destroyer III won a very controversial decision over Steve Olsonoski and Buck Zumhoff . . . Jesse Ventura lost by disqualification to Greg Gagne . . . Adrian Adonis crowned Ron Ritchie. □

Dusty Rhodes and Manny Fernandez:



Dusty Rhodes poses with up and coming superstar, Manny Fernandez. Rhodes held the NWA title briefly last summer.

DUSTY RHODES AND Manny Fernandez are friends. Sort of. At least they've been buddies since Fernandez broke into Florida wrestling. Dusty was more than willing to help out Fernandez with advice.

"Dusty has always been helpful," said Fernandez. "Any time I've approached him with a problem, Dusty would try and help me out. He's been a good friend."

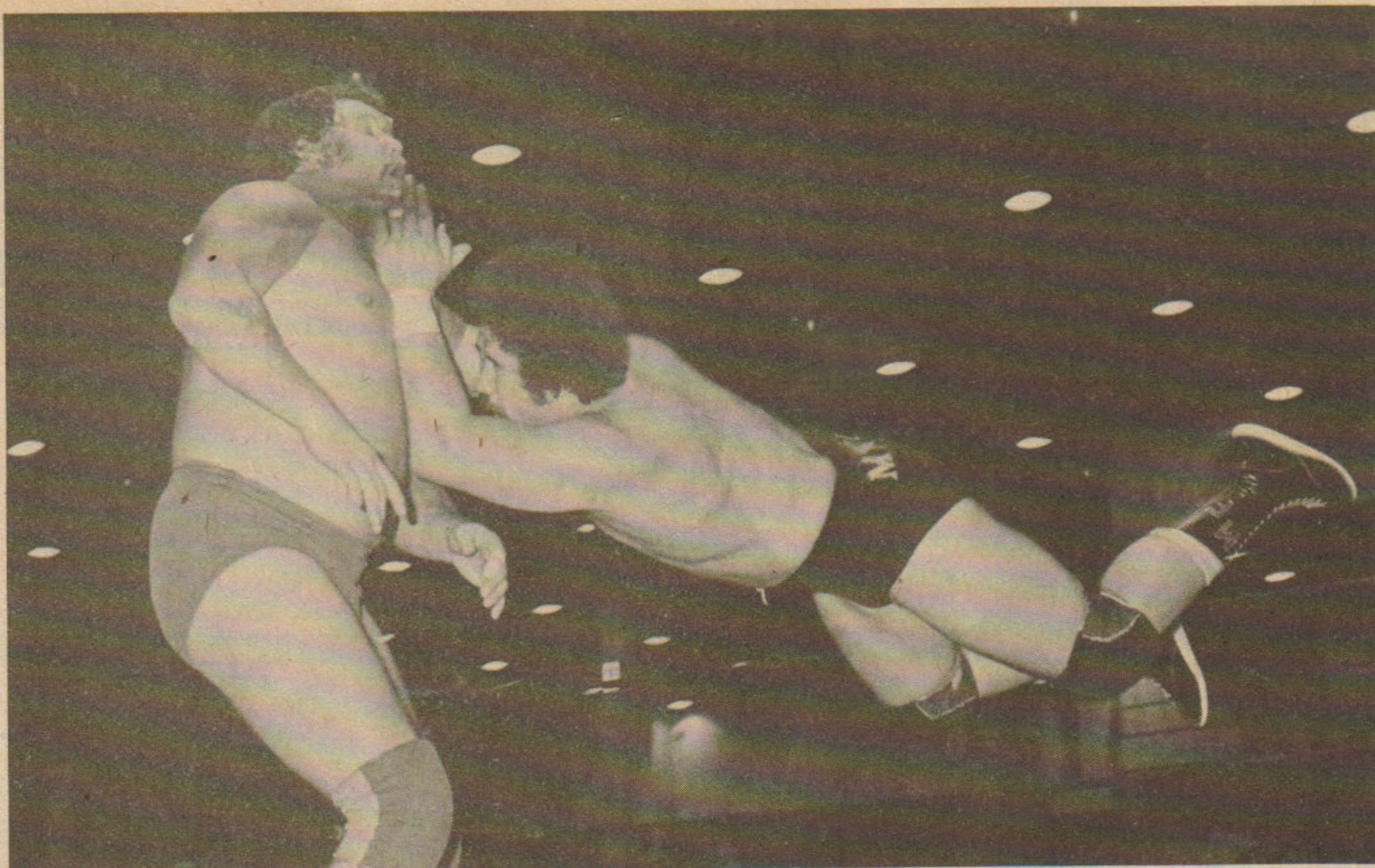
"Manny's been a solid buddy," said Rhodes. "He's a good young talent and I'm mighty proud to have said I've worked with him."

If their comments border on caution, there's a good reason for that. Jealousy and the demands of a fiercely competitive sport have combined to introduce a schism in their relationship. Right now, it's small, but growing.

A source close to both men described the casual remark made by Fernandez which generated this controversy.

"Manny was sitting in the dressing room, toweling himself off," said our source. "He'd just had a rough match against a decent guy, but the guy wasn't anything special. Manny was kinda down and

WILL HARLEY RACE MAKE THEM ENEMIES?



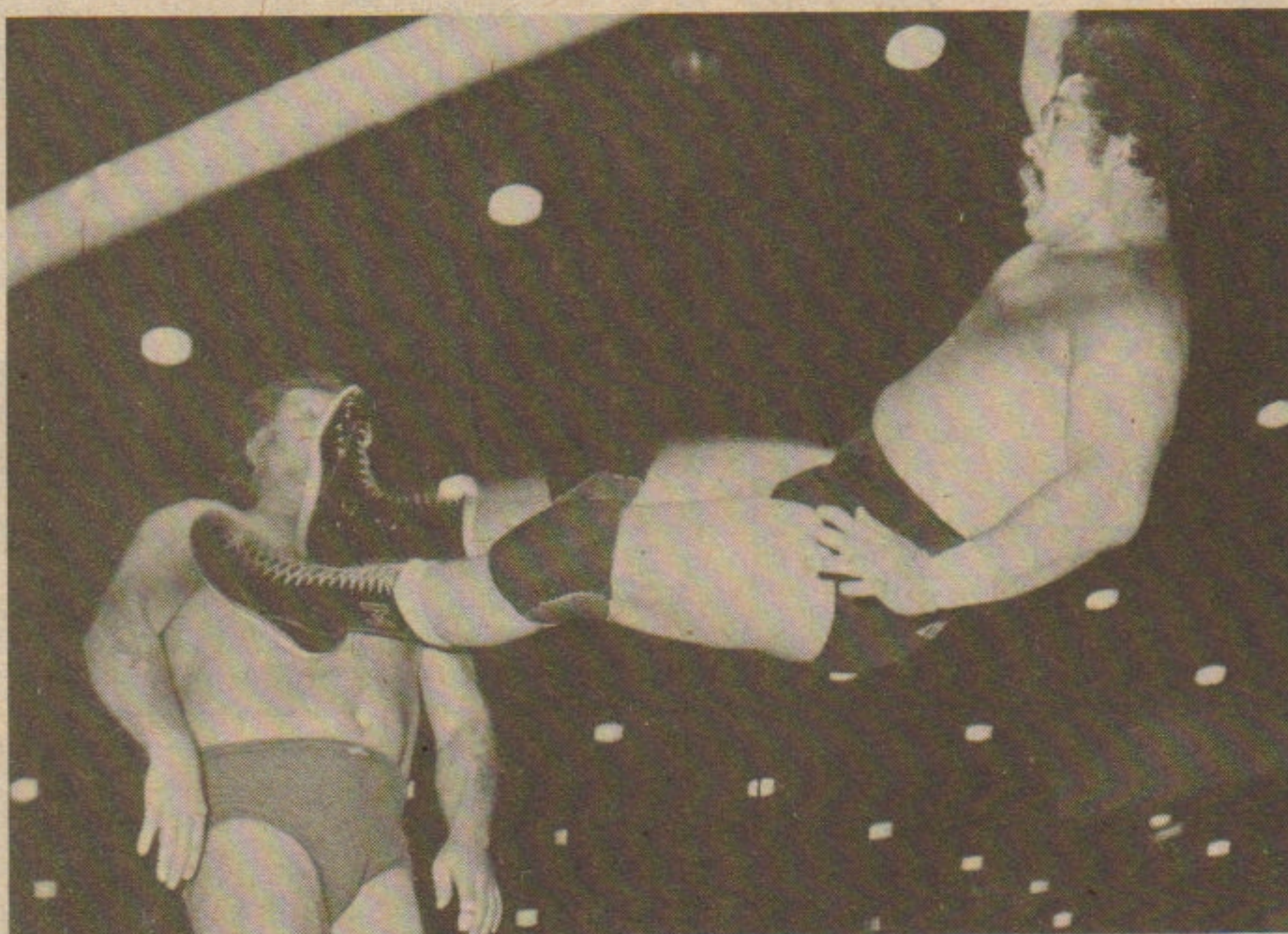
No matter how friendly two wrestlers become, they know the NWA title is more important than any friendship. Dusty Rhodes and Manny Fernandez are friends steamrolling toward hatred. Harley Race, NWA king, is laughing as he fuels the furnace of rage

everyone thought it was cause of the tough match.

"But you can tell when something is eating away at Fernandez. His big brown eyes narrow and seem filled with inner fire," continued the source. "He gets very, very quiet, which is strange because Manny is a very friendly guy. When Manny gets like that, you have to learn to give him room. Eventually, whatever is bugging him comes out."

"So Manny took some deep breaths and said what was on his mind. Now you gotta understand *how* Manny said this. It wasn't with great anger, just irritation; like he felt if he didn't get this off his chest, he'd burst," said the source. "But

(Continued on page 47)



There is no outward hostility between Dusty Rhodes and Manny Fernandez, but Manny does resent the fact that Dusty receives so many NWA title shots. And that resentment is growing. Fernandez sends champion Harley Race reeling with a flying tackle (top) and a dropkick (above).

At an age when most men are just beginning their careers, Bob Backlund has been at the top of his profession for two years. His title reign has been a strain that would crush a lesser man. The human body can stand so much. Is it time for Backlund to end his devastating ordeal?

**AFTER AS
TWO YEARS
CHAMPION ...**



HAS BACKLUND HAD ENOUGH?

THE MORNING SUN floods into still another motel room. The light awakens Bob Backlund, who has to think a moment to remember what town he's in. He starts to move. Then comes the pain.

This time it's in his shoulder. The slightest movement sends electric waves of pain to the muscles and joints. Awkwardly, to minimize the agony, Backlund arises and heads toward the shower. That's when his ankle, also injured the night before, reminds him how badly

contracts, and thousands of fans looking forward to seeing him. He can't take a rest, a vacation, time to recuperate. For two years, Backlund hasn't stopped battling.

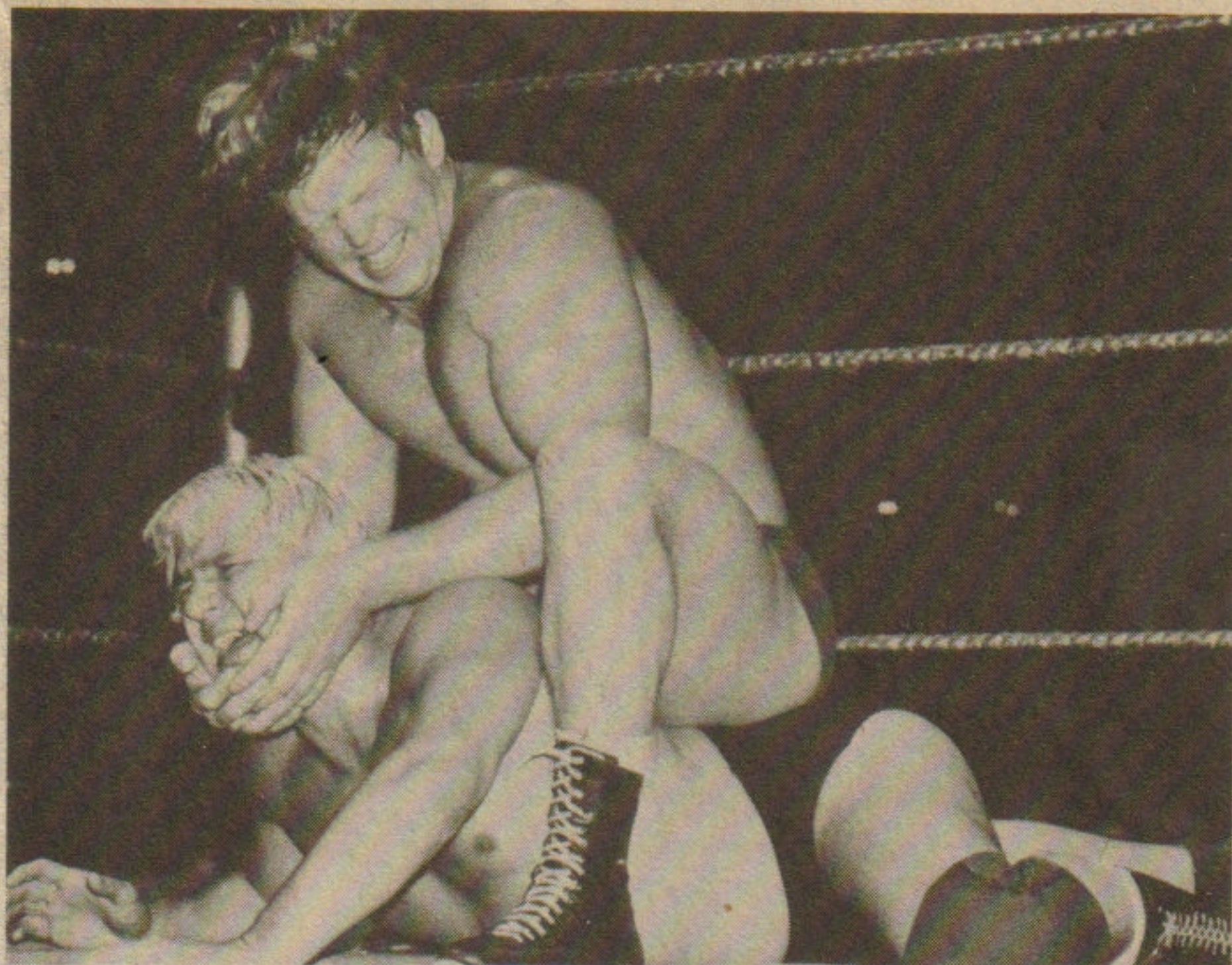
When he arrives at the airport, reporters are there to greet him. Though needing a rest, Bob fulfills his responsibility to the press. A champion has many responsibilities.

He answers the same questions that were asked at the last stop, which was a repeat of the stop before. Bob answers

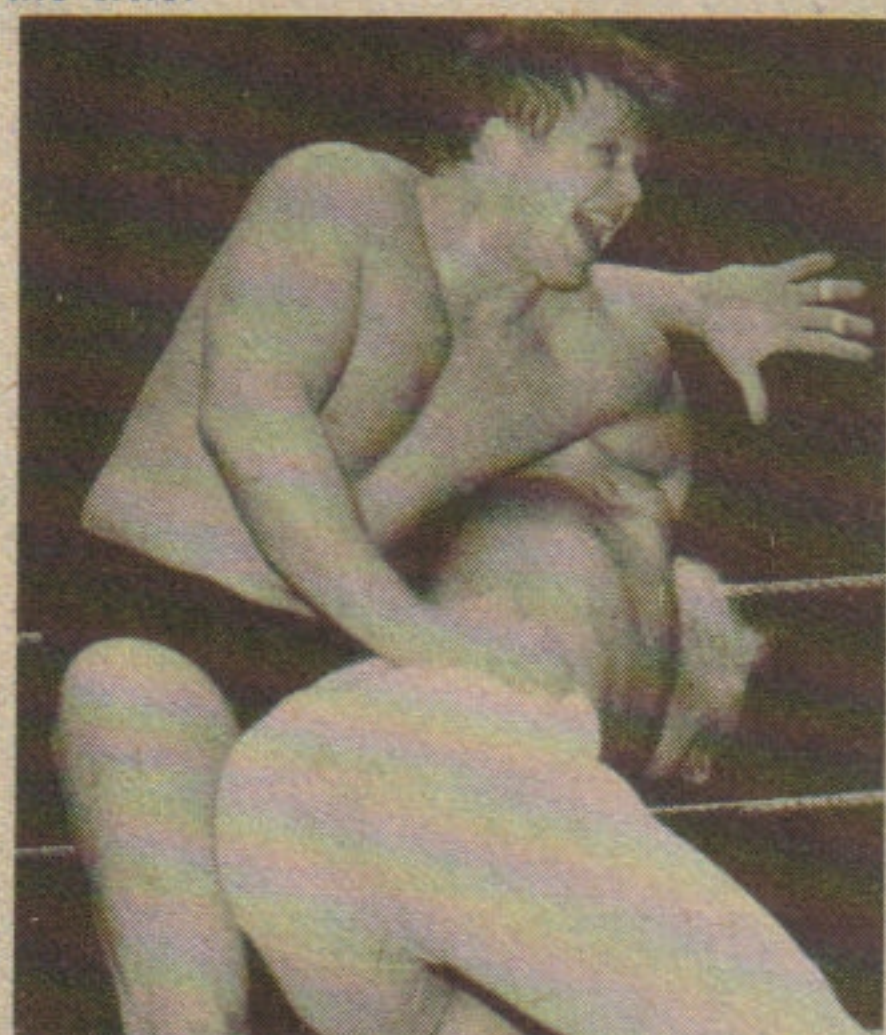
it was sprained. Bob winces and keeps going. He's used to the pain by now.

The hot shower doesn't help much, nor does the alcohol. Bob doesn't have time to rest and recuperate. In an hour he's due at the airport. Tomorrow night he once again must defend his title. As he gets into his rented car, he tries to think of strategies that will protect his shoulder.

Business as usual. Bob Backlund is in the business of wrestling. He has obligations,



Backlund borrows the "camel clutch" from the Sheik and lends it to Pat Patterson (above). Bob applies the abdominal stretch to Superstar Graham (below), the man he defeated to win the title.

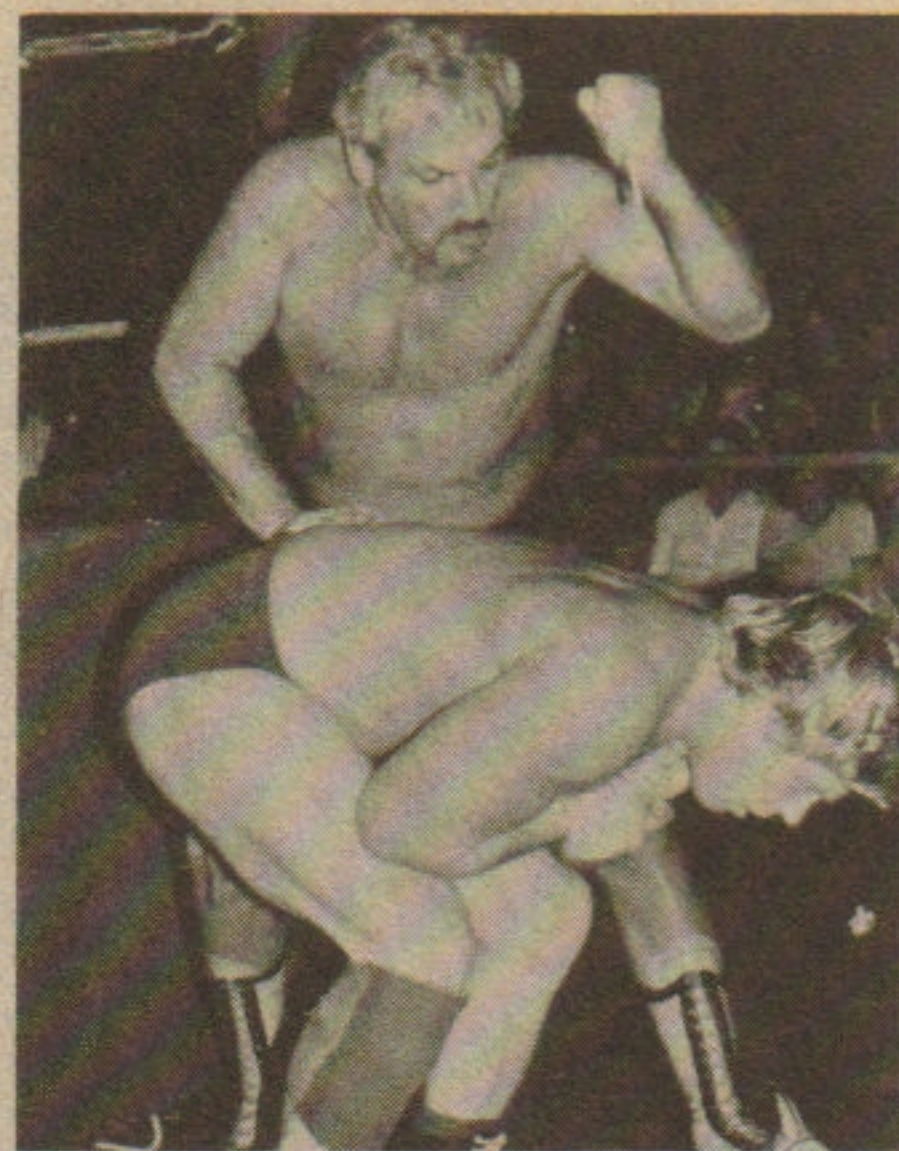


politely, if wearily. It's part of the job.

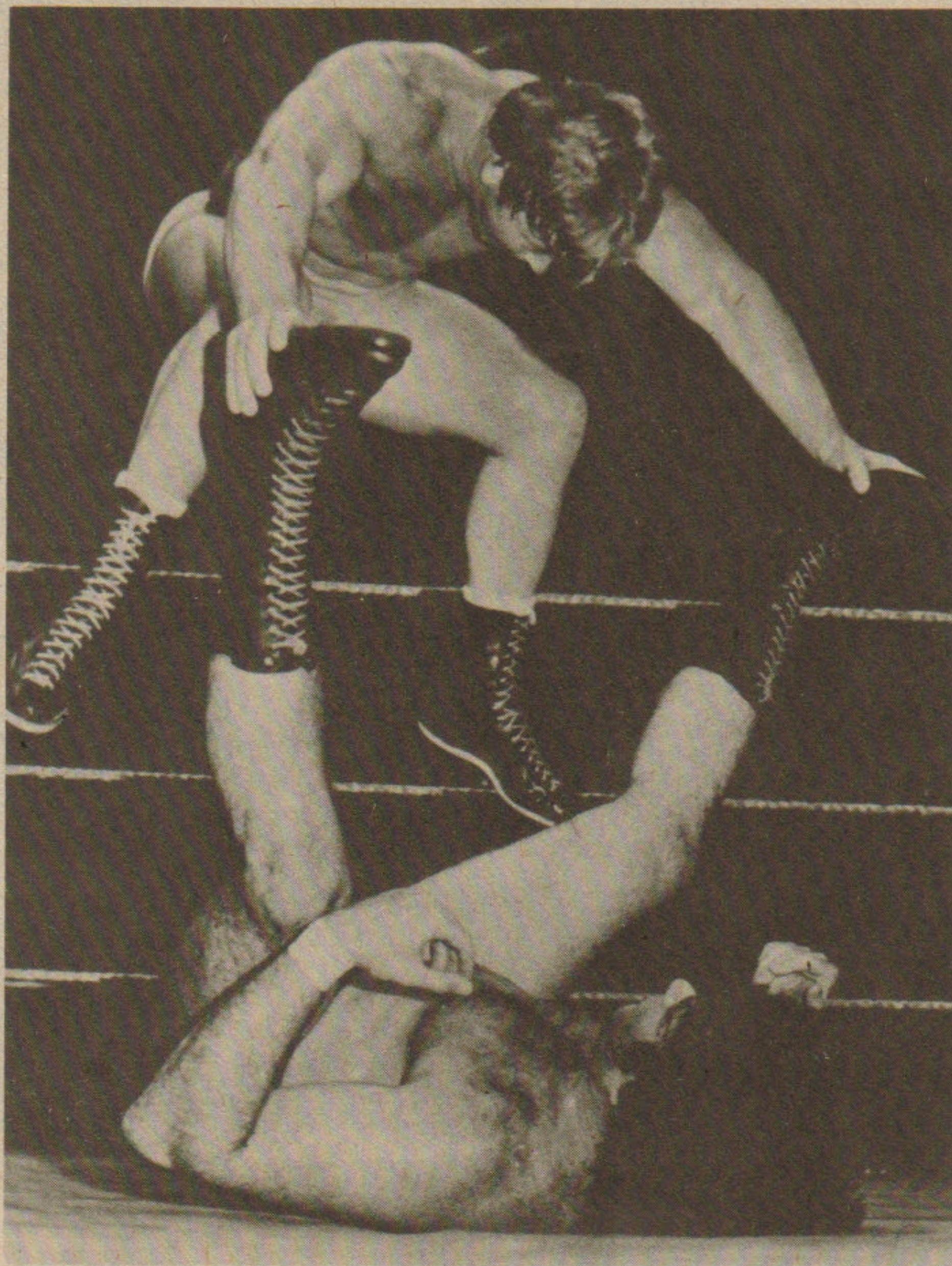
That afternoon, Bob visits the children's ward in a local hospital. For the first time in a long time, Bob relaxes and enjoys himself. It delights him to know his title and presence mean so much to the youngsters. He's rejuvenated.

His new found energy barely lasts him through dinner. He goes to his motel room early, turns on the television and almost immediately falls asleep.

(Continued on page 50)



The Sheik lifts a knee to Bob's throat and autographs the back of his neck (above). The WWF champion leaps upon the chest of Spiros Arion (below).



THE CONTRACT WAS clear and unyielding.

"The loser of this match shall be banished from Georgia wrestling arenas," the clause read.

Both Tommy Rich and Bobby Heenan accepted the loser-leave-town match with all its implications. Originally Terry Funk was to wrestle Rich in the cage, but Funk begged off, claiming some mysterious disease.

Heenan was more than happy to replace Funk. And Rich was delighted to face him.

"I get more satisfaction out of whipping Heenan than any other wrestler," said Rich. "That guy's tried to do everything to ruin my career. He's tried to cripple me and send his mindless thugs after me, all with the intention of permanently hurting me and getting me out of wrestling."

"Well, I look forward to battering Heenan around the cage, bloodying his body and sending him back to the AWA," said Rich. "He never belonged here in the first place."

This match went according to pre-bout predictions. Young Rich kept his calm, poised plan, only succumbing to measured brawling when Heenan managed to slip a foreign object into the ring and try to carve his initials on Rich's face.

Despite such gruesome tactics, Rich prevailed, sending Heenan westward, back to the AWA, this time as a manager only. And that's why AWA fans hate Tommy Rich.

Already Heenan had signed to return as Nick Bockwinkel's manager.

"I want Bobby back at my side, helping me chart a course through these slimy waters filled with polluted fish like Gagne," said Bockwinkel.

And Heenan was more than happy to return.

"Me and Nicky are like brothers," said "The Brain." "While I enjoyed managing men like Killer Kox and Masked Superstar, Nick has always been special to me."

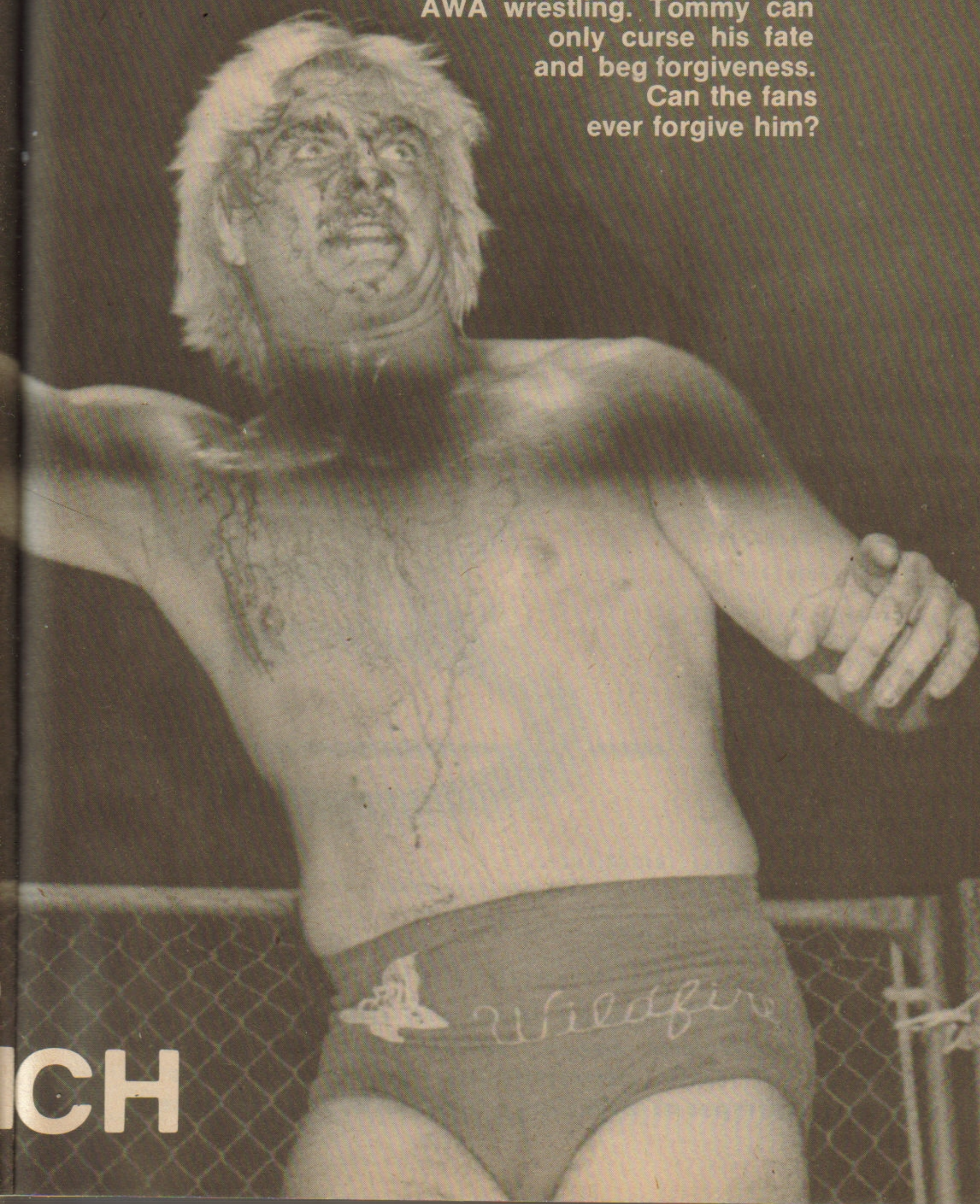
Even though Heenan has signed a contract to manage Bockwinkel, he had one small problem which even the self-proclaimed brain of wrestling couldn't surmount. Until that cage match provided the ready device.

(Continued on page 62)



WHY AWA FANS HATE TOMMY RICH

Due to circumstances beyond his control, Tommy Rich may be responsible for the worst thing that has ever happened to AWA wrestling. Tommy can only curse his fate and beg forgiveness. Can the fans ever forgive him?



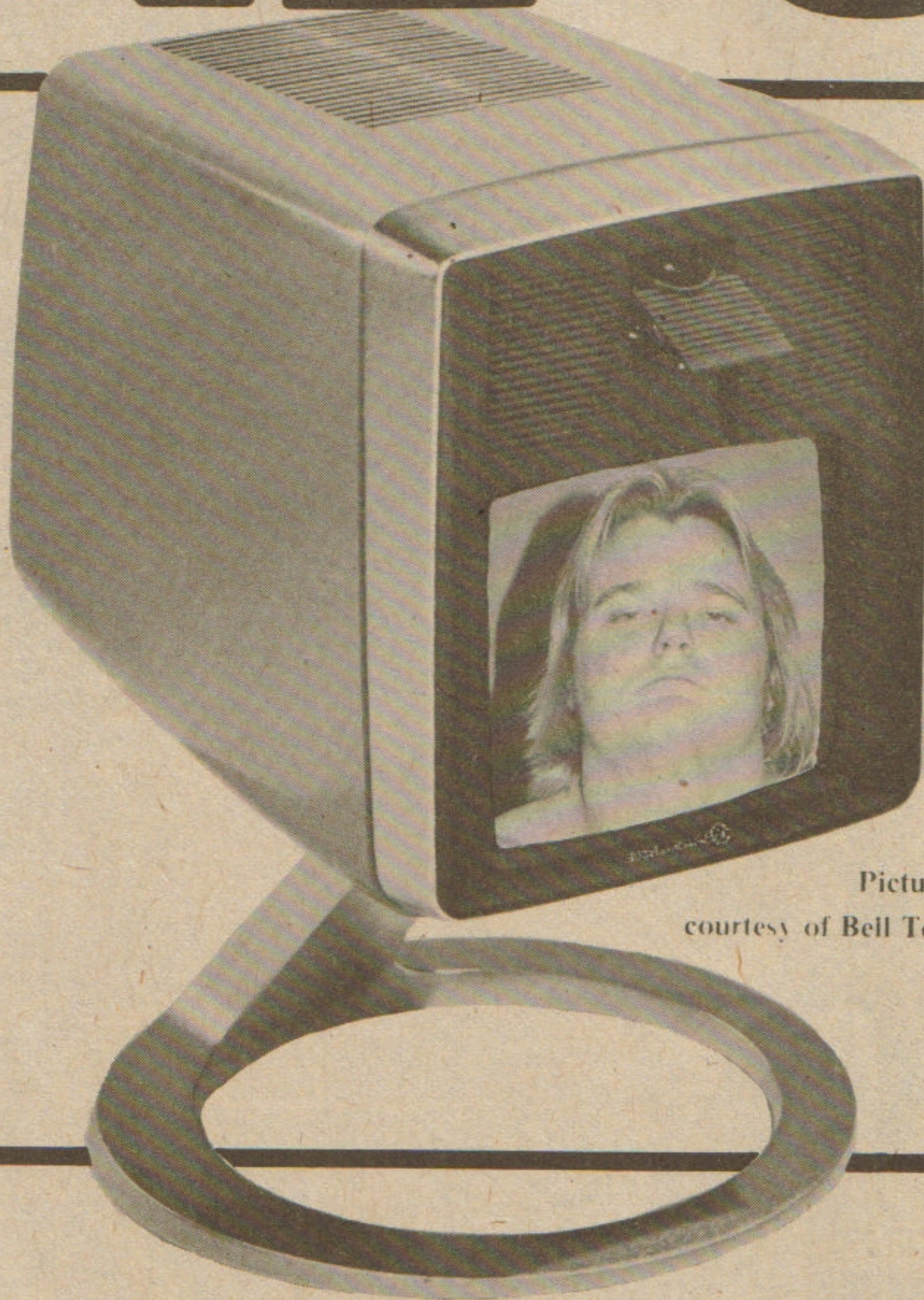
CH

ONE ON



When Greg Valentine returned to the Mid-Atlantic area, he hoped to team once again with Ric Flair. It was not to be, however.

(Their names were once synonymous with double-edged cruelty. For years, they spread a reign of horrific terror throughout the Mid-Atlantic area. Each mistrusted the entire world save for his partner. Then one of the blonds left the area. He insisted it was to conquer new horizons. During his absence, the other changed. Suddenly fans weren't booing him. Suddenly the old feud turned into new friends. And when his former partner returned, he wasn't greeted with warmth, but with contempt. Finally, Ric Flair and Greg Valentine air their views. They are not pleasant.)



Picturephones
courtesy of Bell Telephone

RIC FLAIR:

Hey, Valentine, hold up your hands.

GREG VALENTINE:

Why?

RF: I wanna see if you got some-

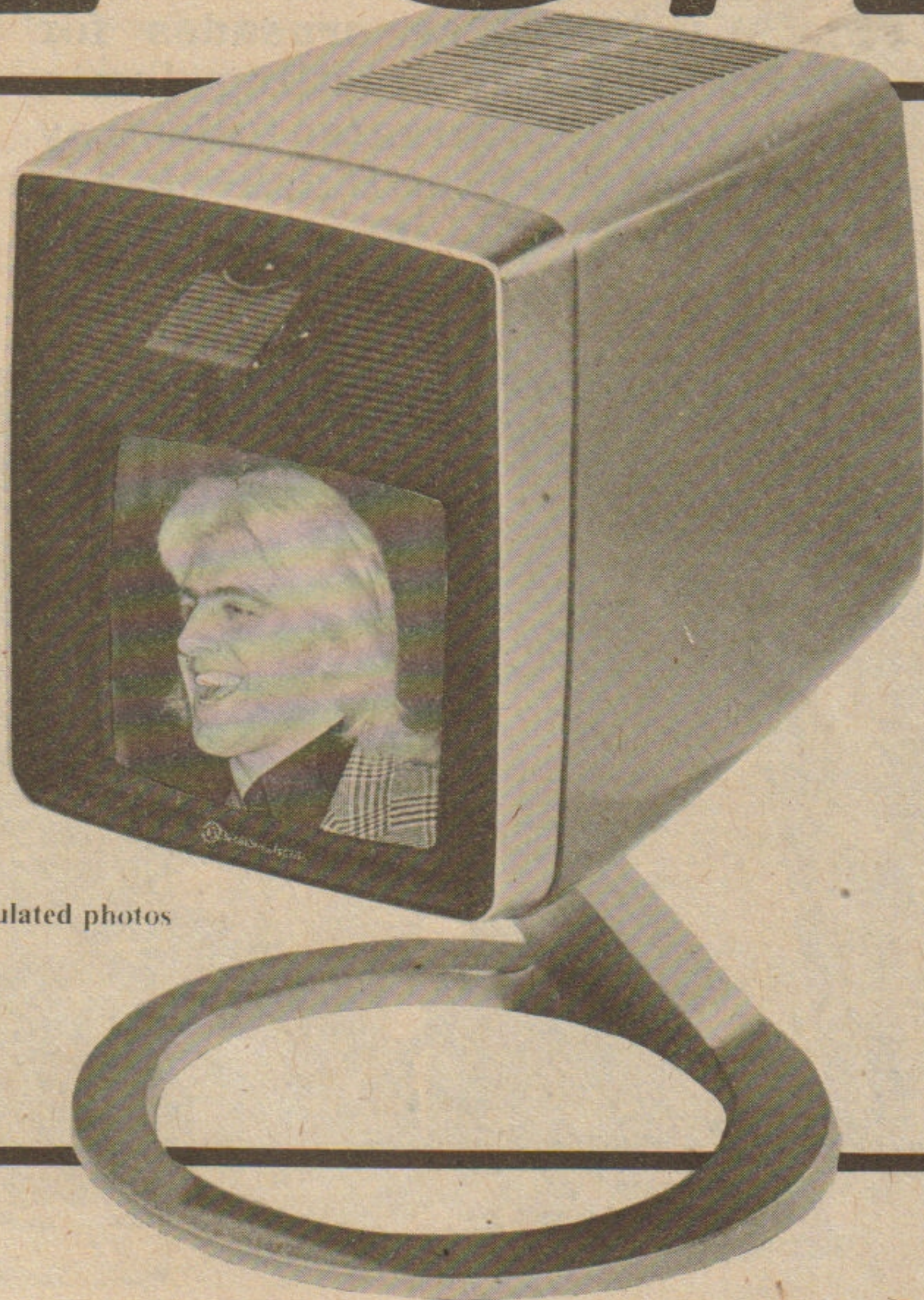
one's blood on your fingers.

GV: Not yet. If you had the guts to wrestle me, maybe that'd change.

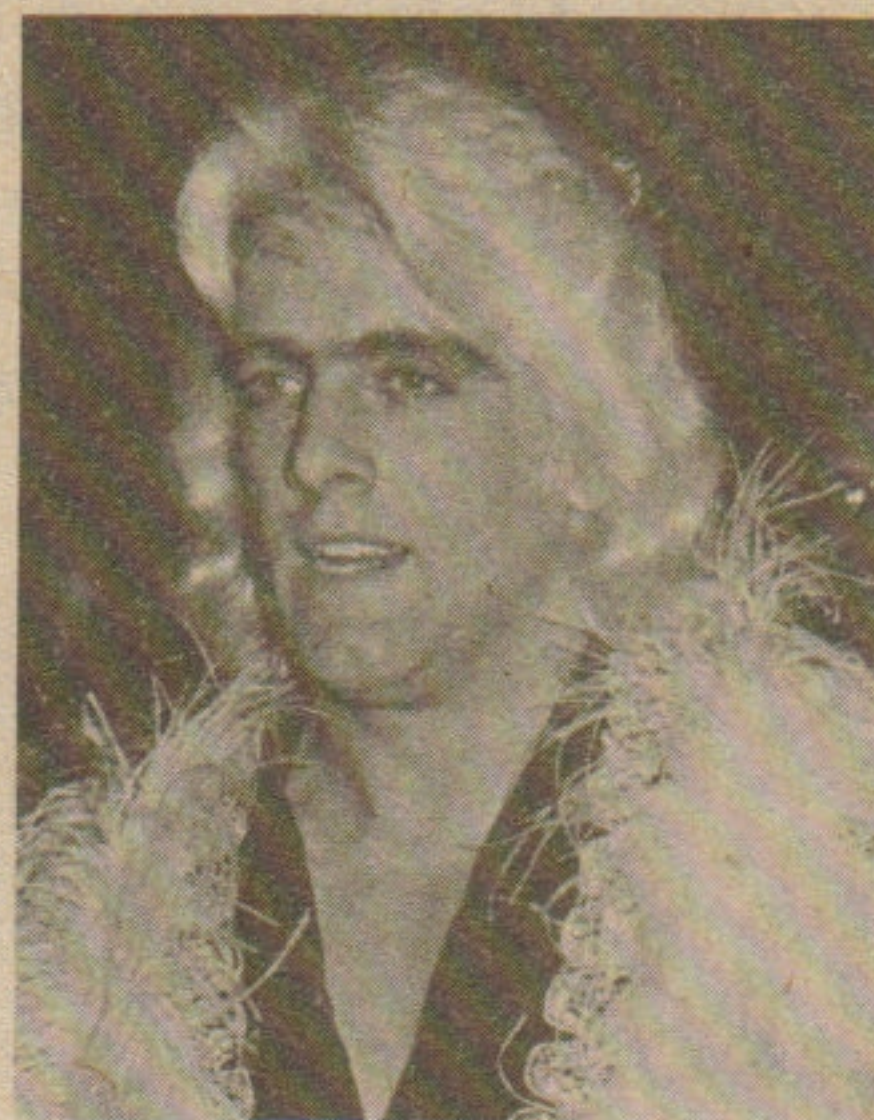
RF: I wasn't the one who ran away when things got too hot

Every month the telephone wires will crackle as two top grapplers rage and argue. We'll print the unedited transcript of their conversations, giving the fans a privileged glimpse at wrestlers which can be found nowhere else

W W ONE



Simulated photos



Ric Flair underwent a major change after Valentine left the area. And he was not about to change back when Greg returned.

down here.
GV: I never ran.
RF: Bull. We were being attacked on all fronts. Everyone was turning against us. It was just me, you and John [Studd]. But you hadda run away. You were afraid, Valentine. You were just yellow.
GV: I had my ambitions.
RF: Come on, Valentine. We coulda owned this place. Who was our competition,

huh?
GV: You tell me, Flair. You're wrestlin' with all of your buddies. Tell me how nice Steamboat is. He stab you in the back yet? Or how's about that punk Jay Youngblood? He your good buddy now?
RF: Yeah, they're my friends.
GV: Fool. You think they're . . .
RF: Hey, Steamboat has class, something I never realized before.

GV: That bum tried to rip apart your skull.

RF: Gotta forgive and forget.

GV: I don't believe you, man, you're up to something.

RF: Like?

GV: I don't know. Wouldn't surprise me if you turned on everyone.

RF: Hey, I don't have to . . .

GV: I got the word you're lookin' to sneak-attack Steamboat. Not that I blame you, but at least be up front, man.

RF: I'm a man of my word, Valentine. I keep my promises an I'm loyal to my friends, which is more than you've ever been.

GV: That's what's eatin' at your guts, huh, Flair?

RF: Yup. You left me. Pure and simple, man, you deserted me. Now you come back when the whole Mid-Atlantic

(Continued on page 64)

MIL MASCARAS —

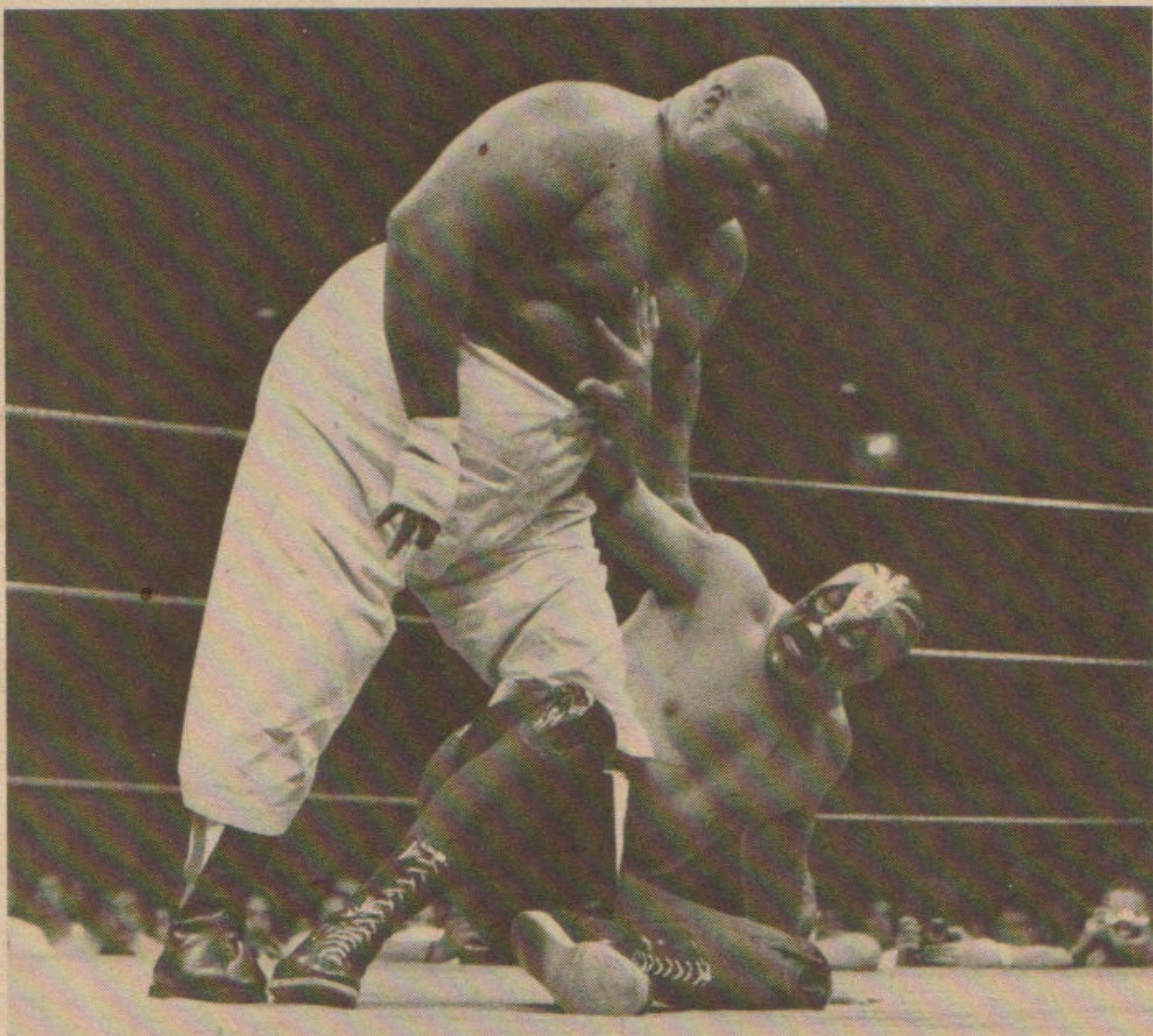
Like a knight of old, Mil Mascaras crusades for righteousness. His field of battle is any wrestling ring in the world. His enemies are those who threaten to destroy the sport for their own gain. Abdullah the Butcher is one such enemy. Mil's honor compelled him to accept Abdullah's challenge

BY MITSU MOROBITO,
Special Japanese Correspondent

THE JET LANDED just past midnight. Stiff and weary after the long flight, Mil Mascaras disembarked. I was waiting for him. We shook hands, exchanged greetings, and then drove to his hotel. I could see this was not the time to give him the particulars of his mission.

As I dropped him off at his hotel, Mil instructed, "Be here by nine. I want to know everything."

Everything, I thought, as I drove back to my home. How do you begin to describe the agony, the fear, and the sorrow brought to our island by Abdullah the Butcher? Some of the nation's best wrestlers were spending this night in hospital beds. At least two would never wrestle again. All because of Abdullah the Butcher's ruthless reign of terror?



Responding to the plea of Japanese wrestling promoters, Mil Mascaras flew across the world to battle the fearsome Abdullah the Butcher. Above: Mil tries to bring Abdullah to the mat with a scissors trip.

GLOBETROTTING TROUBLESHOOTER

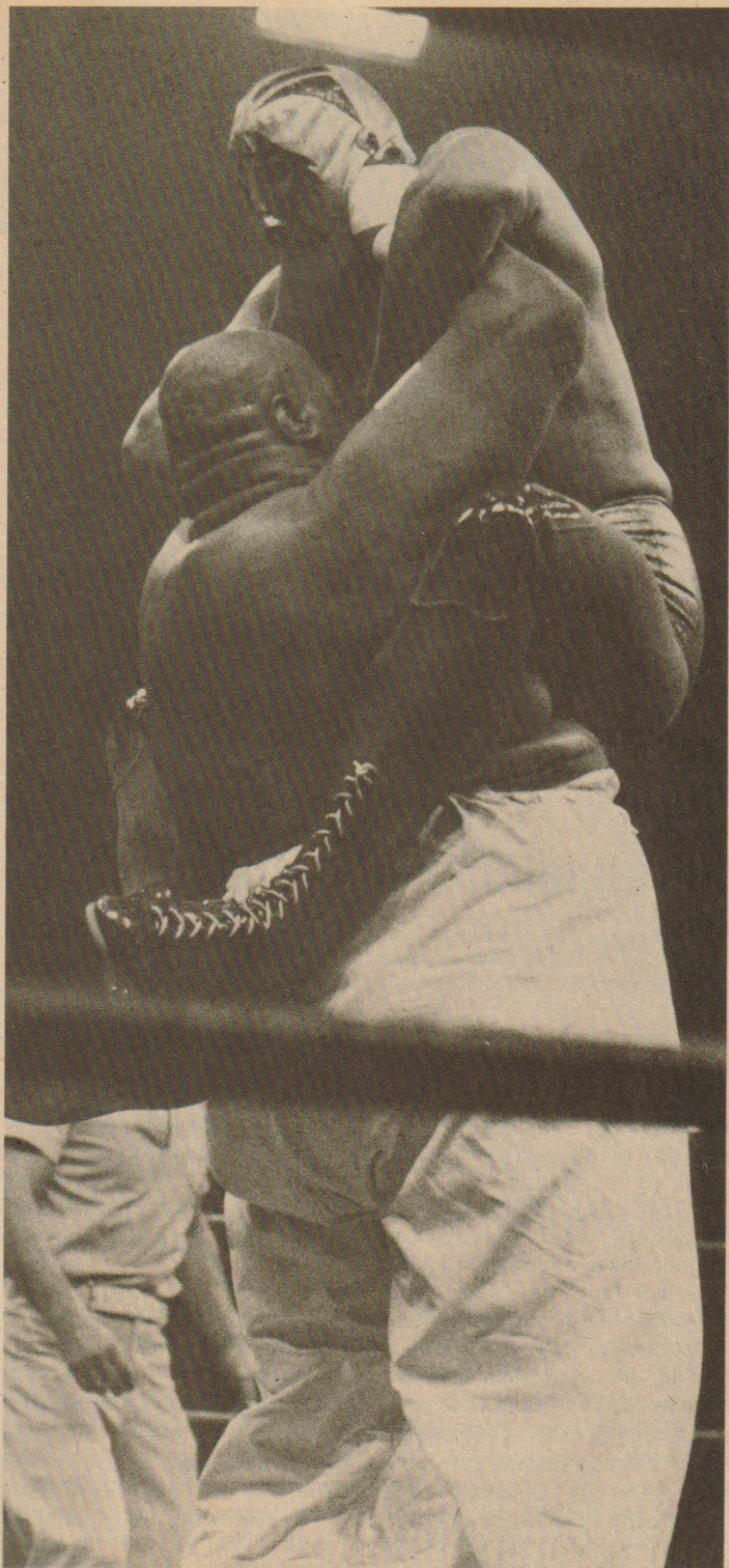
Abdullah uses his awesome strength to lift Mascaras in the air by his neck. The Masked Mexican somehow managed to escape the hold.

Though it had been less than a month, it was hard to remember Japanese wrestling before Abdullah came. Could there really have been a time when a stretcher wasn't needed at an arena? Did we once rest secure knowing that decency triumphed in our sport? Abdullah was like a plague that wiped out even the good memories of what came before its arrival.

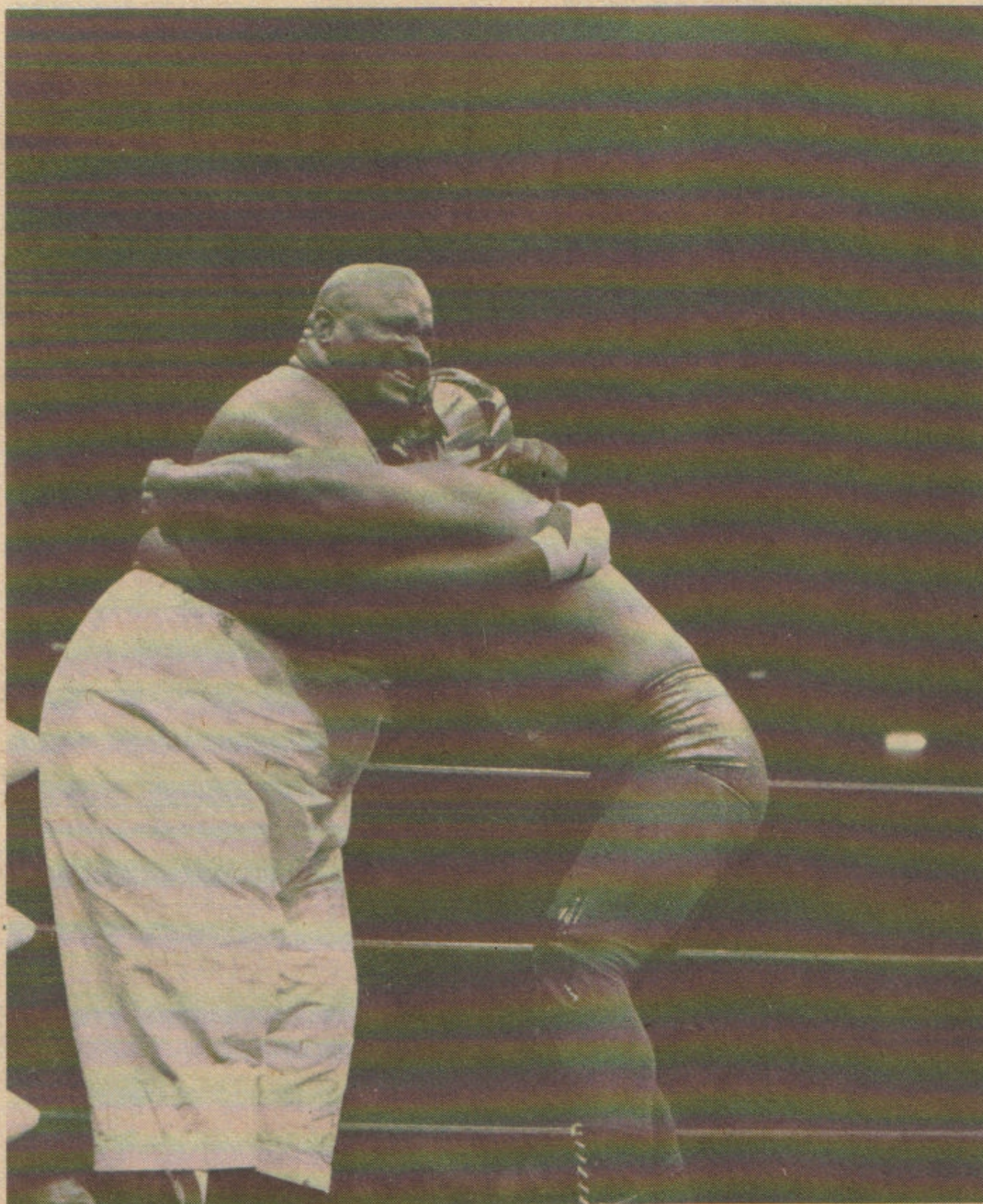
Somehow, Mil Mascaras had heard of the horror. Mil is perhaps the best friend Japanese wrestling has; perhaps the best friend wrestling anywhere has. He immediately volunteered to come to the island and wrestle Abdullah. Because I've been following Abdullah's matches, Mil asked to see me to discuss the strategies Abdullah uses. I was honored to help.

The next morning, I arrived to find Mil studying films of Abdullah's matches. As he studied them intently, he also listened to me describe the matches. It was two in the afternoon before we were finished.

"I can see what's happening," Mil explained. "Whenever somebody starts conquering all, like Abdullah is doing, people in the area get scared. The fear feeds on itself, so its out of control. People are victimized by the fear more than the wrestler. It takes someone from outside,



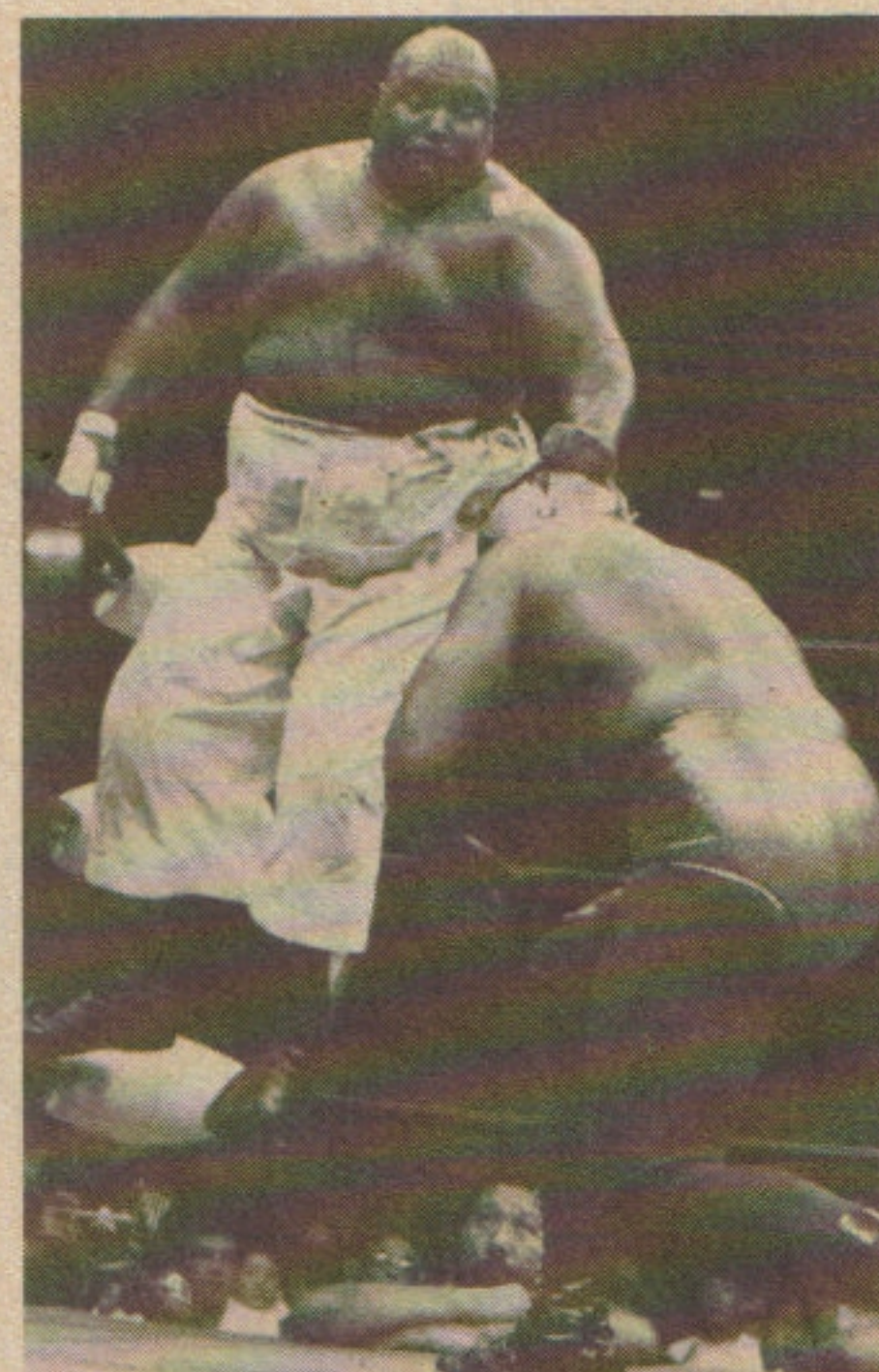
IG
OTER



Above: Mascaras can barely wrap his arms around Abdullah's gigantic body. Right: The Butcher ascends the bottom turnbuckle in preparation for an elbow smash to the back of Mascaras' neck. Both wrestlers were counted out of the ring, but Mascaras proved to the Japanese people that Abdullah is not to be held in awe.

masked gladiator countered each maneuver with a maneuver of his own. It was a superb display of wrestling genius. Every move was economical, powerful, and effective. Abdullah grew more and more frustrated.

Then came the explosion. Abdullah turned into a raging beast. He slashed, clawed, bit, kicked, and brutalized his opponent. The crowd was silent in fear for Mascaras. I can't report what happened during those minutes as I was too scared to take notes.



someone who hasn't been infected by the terror, to stop the conqueror. That's what I'm here for. If it wasn't for this fear, half of Abdullah's opponent's could've beaten him.

"Don't get me wrong. Anywhere against anyone, Abdullah is dangerous. But with the fear on his side, he's unstoppable. I remember, when I first started out, there was a wrestler who kept battering everyone. We thought he was the greatest ever. Then some mediocre wrestler came and beat him. We all asked the winner how he beat the greatest wrestler of all. 'Nobody told me he was the greatest,' the

mediocre grappler replied. I've never forgotten that.

"I'll take Abdullah. I owe it to the sport. Fear shouldn't be a weapon for anyone."

Two days later, Mil confronted Abdullah. If there can be majesty in brutality, there was majesty that night.

From the opening instant, Abdullah was at his meanest. He used every dirty trick in the book to cripple Mil. Everyone could see Abdullah was interested in winning but also in injuring. Most wrestlers would have become cautious, defensive, trying desperately not to be hurt. Mil isn't like most wrestlers.

With astonishing courage, the

No ring could contain such action. The two men spilled out of the ring and onto the arena floor. The referee counted as both men ignored him. They were still battling when the referee announced, "Double disqualification! They have been counted out!"

Abdullah heard the words and fled back to the dressing room. He no longer had any stomach for this war. Watching him go, Mil stood before the cheering crowd.

The next time Abdullah wrestled, you could sense the difference in the air. The fear was gone. Abdullah's opponent wrestled him to a draw. □

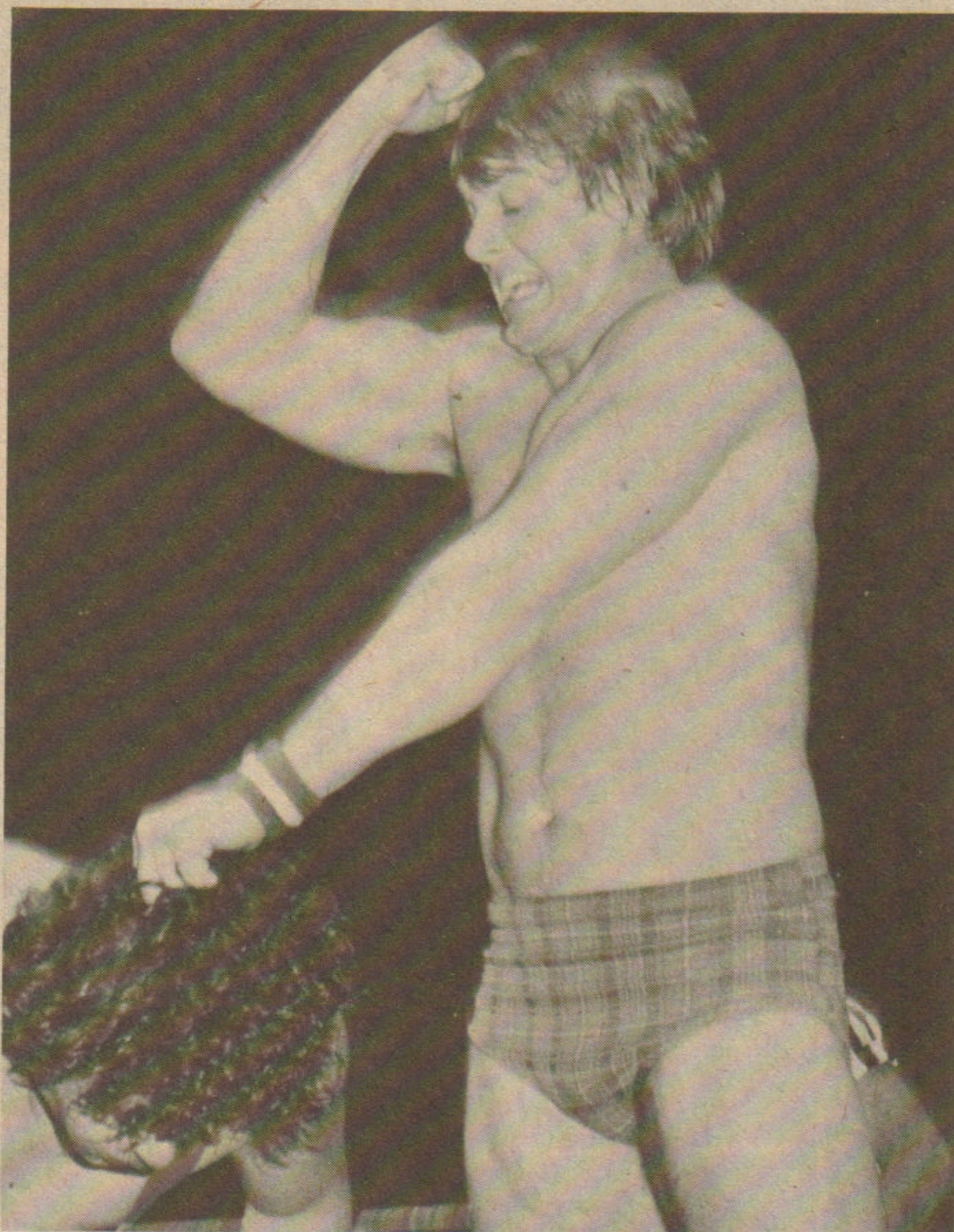
INSIDE WRESTLING

45

capsule profile

RODDY PIPER

HOLDS THE DISTINCTION of being the youngest manager-wrestler in West Coast wrestling history (*"I got my ambition and my age got nothin' to do with it"*) . . . Gained the nickname "Rowdy" for solid reasons (*"I like to get in there and brawl a bit. I'm not one of those slap and dance dudes"*) . . . Exploded on the Pacific scene fresh out of Scotland wrestling arenas (*"A ring is a ring. No matter where it is"*) . . . Immensely proud of his Scottish heritage (*"I'm happy and proud to be a Scotsman. Any time a jerk says otherwise, I cream his face"*) . . . Began his career as a rulebreaker (*"Ah, I was young"*) . . . Most famous feud involved Stan Stasiak (*"Me and Stan just didn't hit it off. What can you say?"*) . . . Now he and Stasiak form a powerful tag team (*"Wrestling makes strange ring-fellows, as a wise man, whose name I forgot, once said"*) . . . His bloodiest war is against "Playboy" Buddy



Although Roddy Piper's style still deems him worthy of the nickname "Rowdy," he is now appreciated by the fans who once hated him. His feud with former WWF champion Stan Stasiak raged in the Northwest for months, but now the two form a powerful tag team.

Rose (*"A pig. A liar. A cheat. A bum. I think that about covers him"*) . . . Fan sentiment has turned toward him in recent times (*"Fans are funny. I don't know. I respect their opinions and it's sure nice to hear them cheer for me"*) . . . Finds the Pacific Northwest an especially

appealing place to wrestle (*"Something about the scenery and all just takes your breath away. It's really magnificent"*) . . . His combination of innate intellect and overpowering skills make him a prime contender for a world title someday (*"World champion. That'd be nice"*). □

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Each day, out of the thousands of letters we receive, hundreds of them are from fans asking the whereabouts of their favorite wrestler. In this special column, we will try to answer the questions you ask the most!

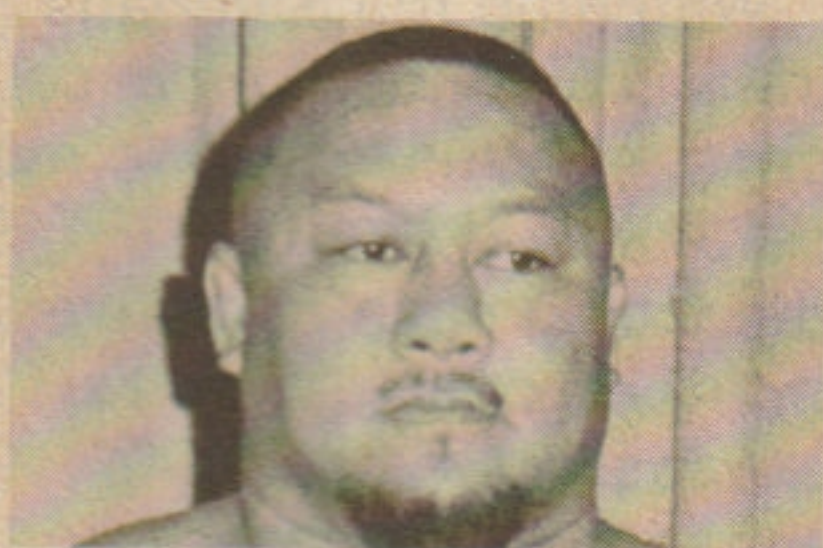


SPIROS ARION

Spiros claims there is a conspiracy among WWF officials to prevent him from receiving a license to wrestle in the area because they know he would beat Bob Backlund and take the WWF title out of the country. For now, though, he is content to remain in New Zealand and Australia. He is the Austro-Asian Champion.

RAY STEVENS

Stevens has turned up in the Mid-Atlantic region in search of a worthy partner with whom he can pose a serious challenge to NWA tag team champions Rick Steamboat and Jay Youngblood. Ray has been seen at ringside for several matches involving Greg Valentine. The combination of Stevens' bombs away and Valentine's figure-four leglock would be awesome.



PROFESSOR TORU TANAKA

After a brief vacation, Tanaka is negotiating for a contract to wrestle in the Georgia area. The only stumbling block seems to be his insistence that he be given a no-holds-barred match with Mr. Wrestling II, whose neck Tanaka broke several years ago.

MIGHTY IGOR

The powerful Pole has vowed to remain in the Detroit area to continue his battle against the infamous Motown rulebreakers. He still claims his source of strength is kielbasa and sends his regards to all his loving fans world wide.



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Feb/65
PEPPER GOMEZ

Pinups are listed under each issue.

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BODYSLAMS & PINFALLS

(Continued from Page 14)



Prior to becoming clients of Lou Albano, the Samoans were a good tag team, but not a great tag team.

benefit from added experience. That's why they're the best.

"So far, I've developed about 50 new strategies for the Samoans. The fans have seen less than 10. We're working on one now that will rock wrestling to its roots. I can't imagine any tag team coming along that can beat the Samoans. I have trained them too hard and too well. They have it all. The Samoans will retire with the belt."

After managing as many tag teams as Albano has, some men would run out of ideas. Albano finds just the opposite is true.

"Tag team wrestling," Lou contends, "is still a young sport. We haven't begun to discover the possibilities. The best tag team in the world hasn't been formed yet. I just hope the sport will be half developed in my lifetime. Some kid reading this magazine will probably manage the first really spectacular tag team, and

that won't be until he's in his 50s. We've got decades of exploration and mistakes to be made. Tag team wrestling is the most exciting sport around!"

It's this excitement that keeps Albano searching out new techniques, struggling to achieve the greatness he knows exists. The fans can curse him all they want. It won't stop him from making the Samoans the greatest tag team champions of all time. Genius doesn't depend on the approval of others.

Watching the Samoans train is a study in physical concentration. The two men perfect every move, practicing each maneuver over and over again. It's exhausting, demanding work. Only the most dedicated grapplers will stand for that kind of mental and physical exhaustion. Albano demands no less than total dedication.

That's why the Samoans will win the WWF tag team title. Albano demands no less. ☐

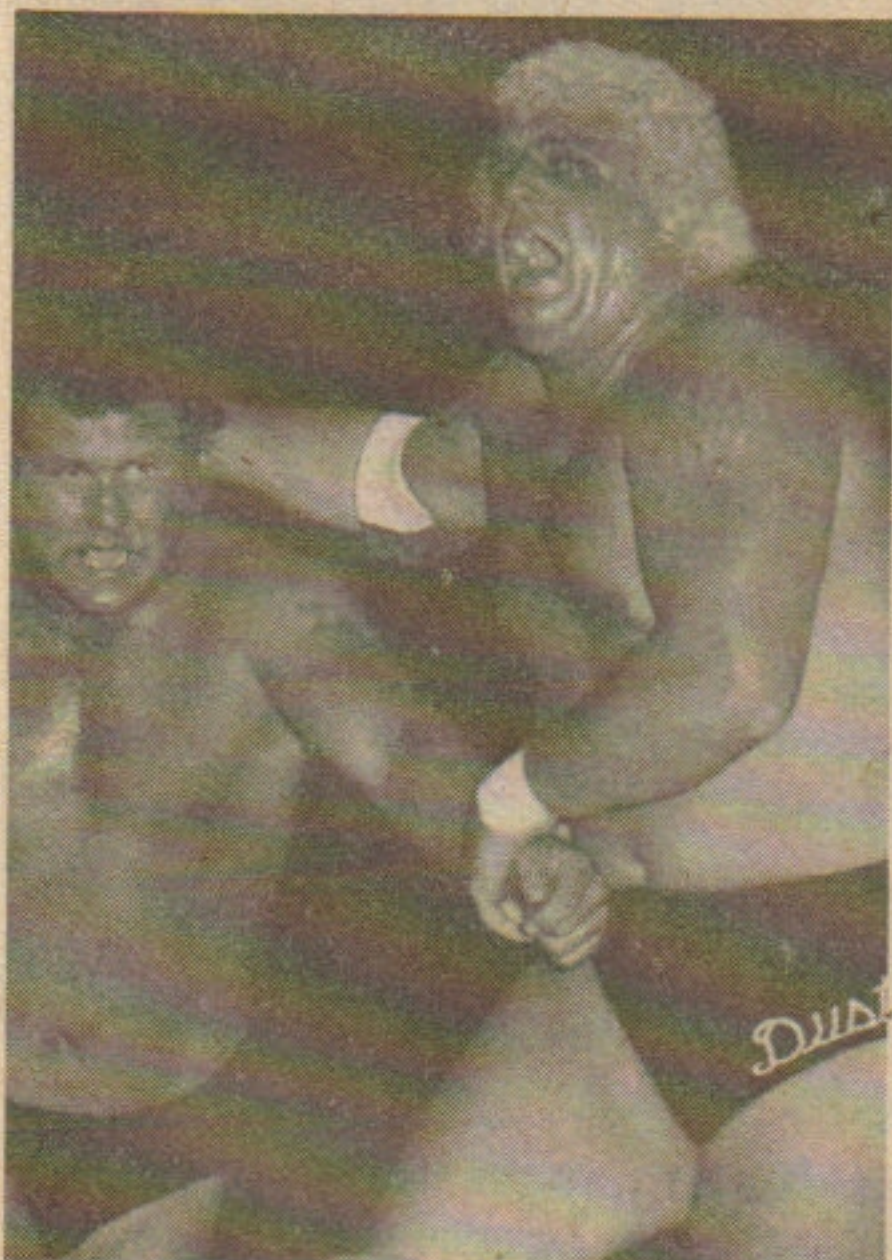
HARLEY RACE

(Continued from Page 31)

Manny did say he thinks it's about time someone other than Dusty Rhodes gets a shot at Harley Race's NWA title."

At this writing, Fernandez is Florida heavyweight champ. That belt is one level beneath Race's. Surely the state champion deserves more title bouts than someone who has no championship. Like Rhodes.

However, the Rhodes-Race wars have deeper meaning than mere champion versus contender. Their hatred threatens to consume and ruin



The Dusty Rhodes-Harley Race feud has transcended normal challenger-champion status. There is more at stake for the two men than a mere championship.

their careers. It isn't like Race can simply turn to another contender and offer him a shot. Each time he considers defending his title, Race wants Dusty Rhodes. And Rhodes wants the champ.

"Yeah, I want that bum Race and I want him wiped all over the lousy mat," snapped Rhodes. "I deserve that title. I can't forget how that bum Race conspired with Funk to steal my title."

(Continued on page 48)

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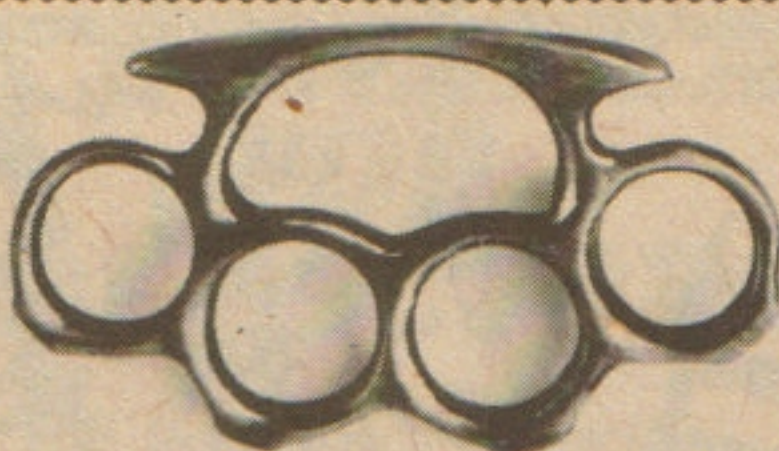
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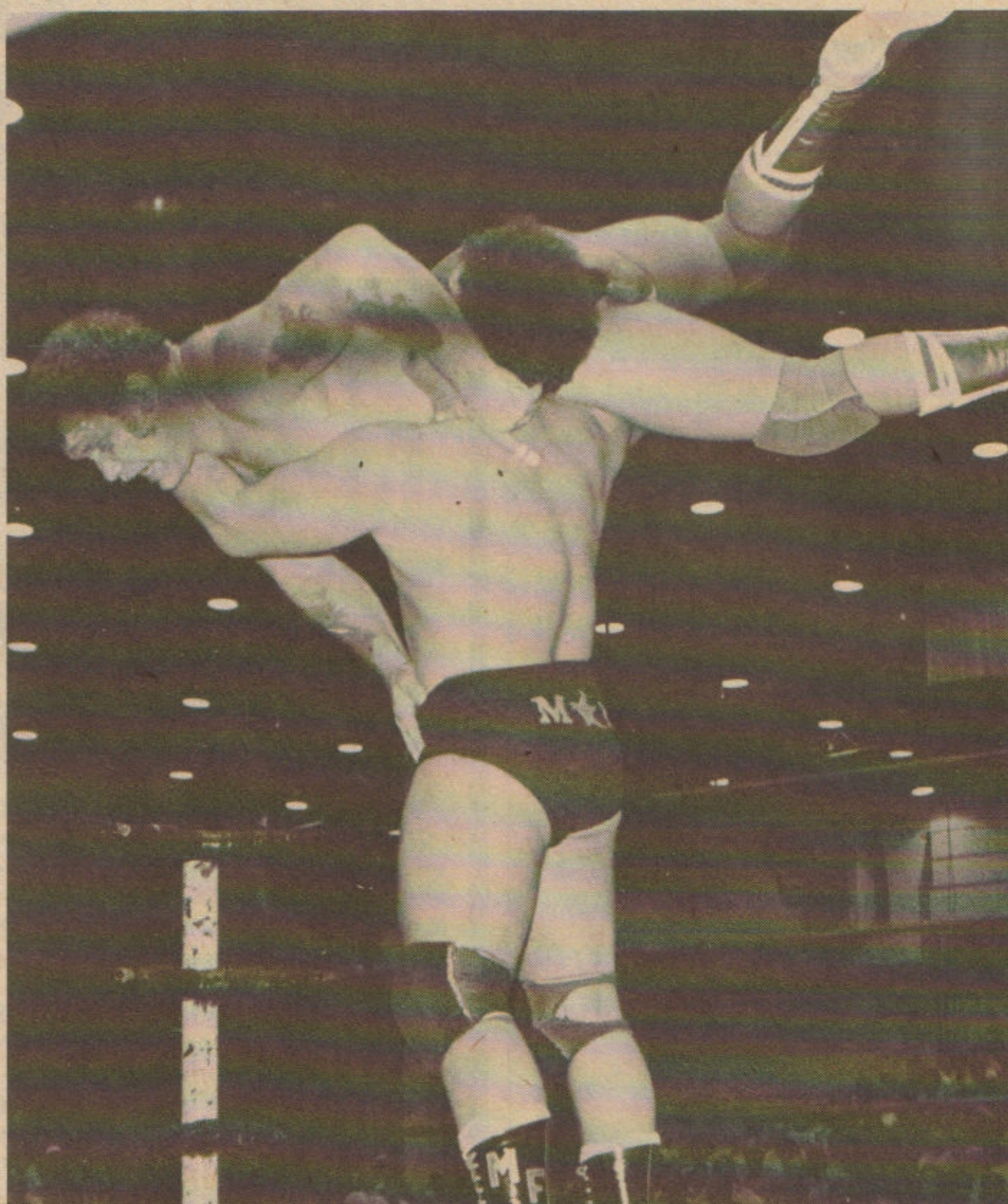
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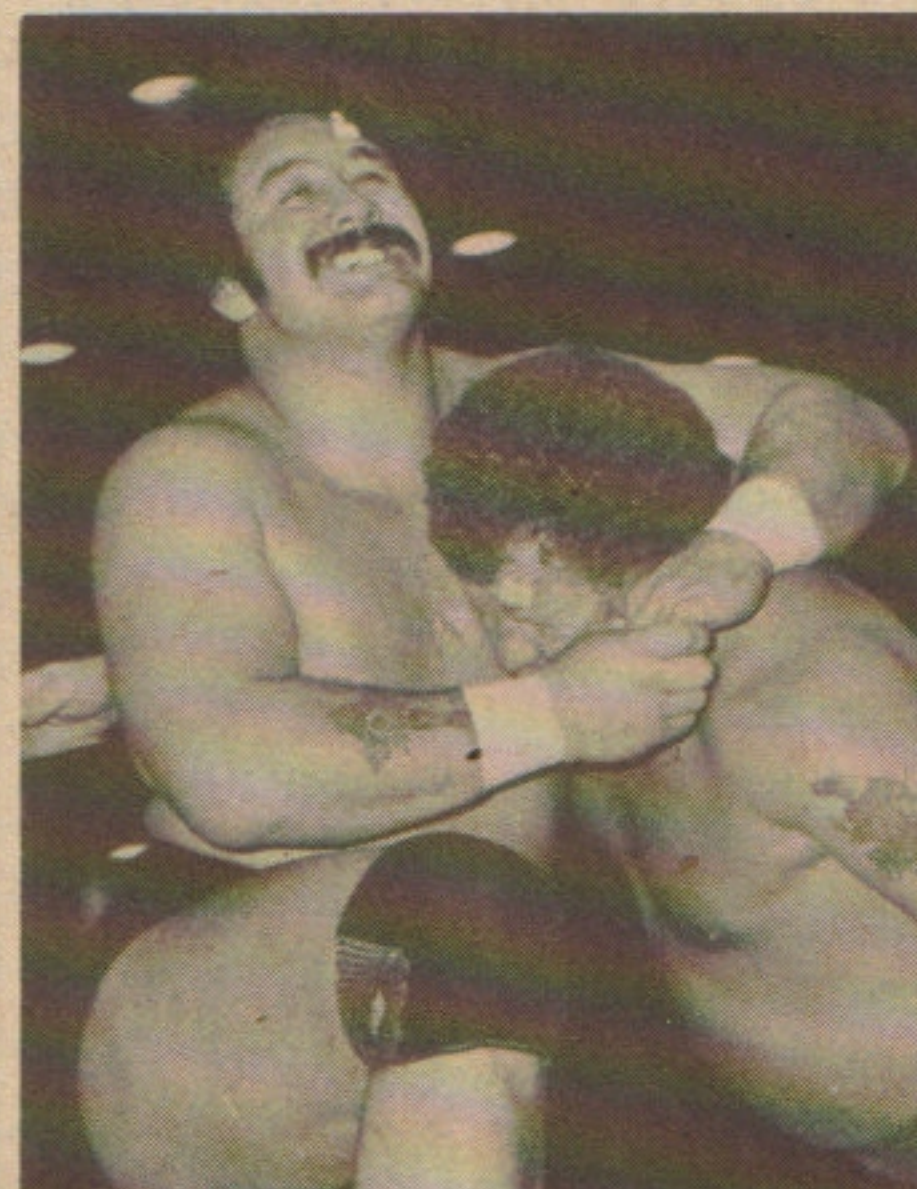
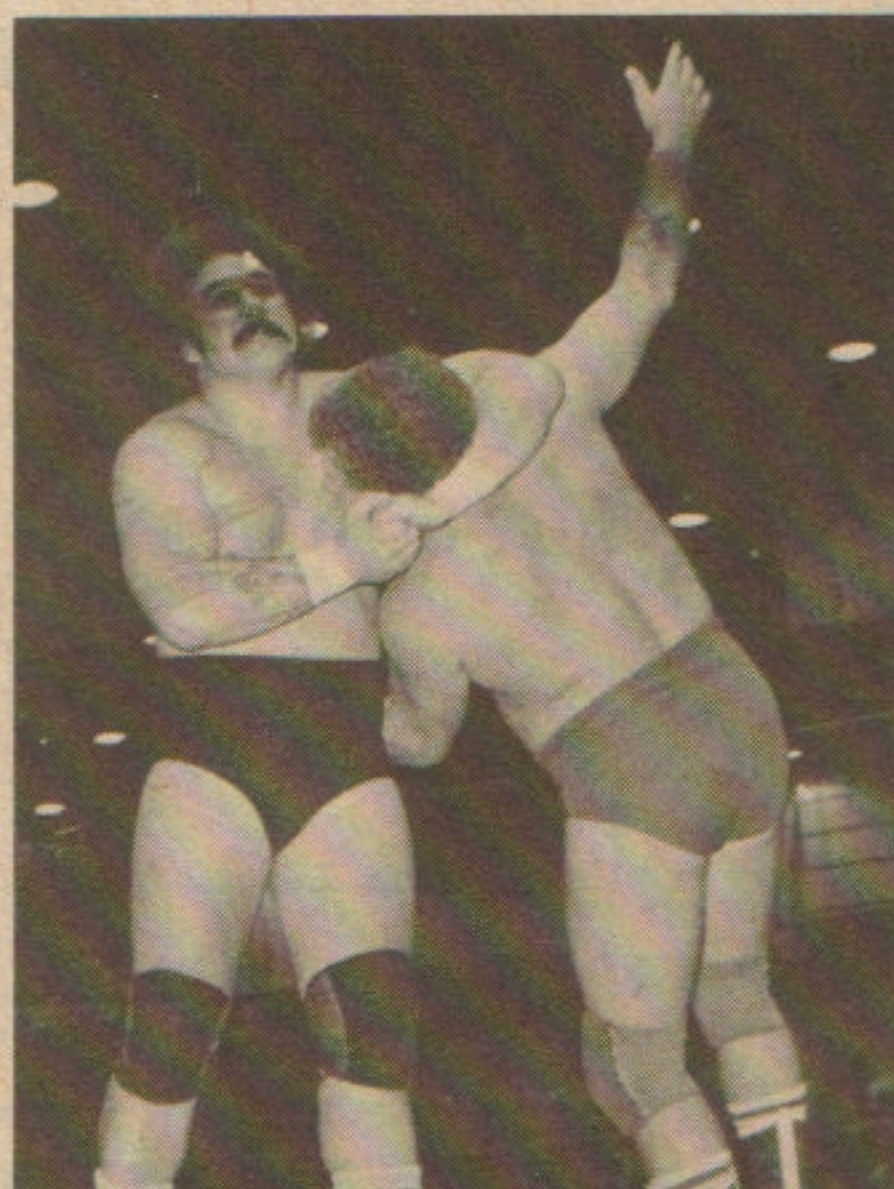
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HARLEY RACE

(Continued from Page 47)



Fernandez feels that Dusty is denying him the opportunity to wrestle Race for the championship. The animosity multiplies every time he sees the two wrestle. Manny once had a title match, but the result was a close draw. Fernandez lifts Race for a bodyslam (above) and rings the champ's head (below left and right).



"So I get first dibs on any title shots. Me. Don't matter one little bit who's ranked where or who's champion of what state," Rhodes continued, growing angry. "Manny gotta realize that."

A young, ambitious wrestler cannot focus nor readily understand the intensity of two veterans like Race and Rhodes. All Fernandez understands, or wants to understand, is why he is denied title shots when Rhodes gets all the championship matches he wants.

"It's not fair," said Fernandez. "I don't care about this feud garbage. If Race can't properly defend his title, then he should relinquish it and take Rhodes into some alley to settle their dispute."

"But a champion has a responsibility to his title, the other contenders, and the fans. I bet a lot of fans are getting mighty tired watching Rhodes and Race knock each other around the ring every other day. It's time to give someone else a break," Fernandez continued.

"What's the use of breaking your back, trying to strive for something if people close the door on your head? I've worked real hard to win the Florida title and move in as NWA champion. But Race won't give me a break," Manny said.

"What surprises me is Dusty's reaction. I thought he'd have some compassion and understanding for me. I thought he'd be fair about all this and a little less selfish," said Fernandez. "He hasn't. He says he'll do what he must and the hell with what happens to others. Well, I won't accept that."

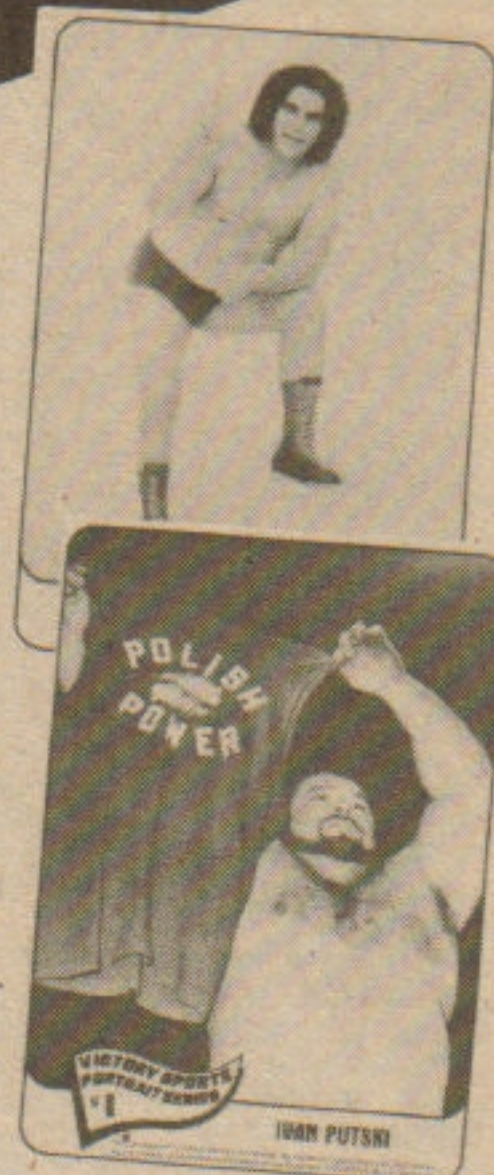
Rhodes does understand Fernandez's dilemma. He knows what struggling is like. But Rhodes has a score to settle. Apparently, the hate is consuming more than just Race and Rhodes. A lot more. ☐

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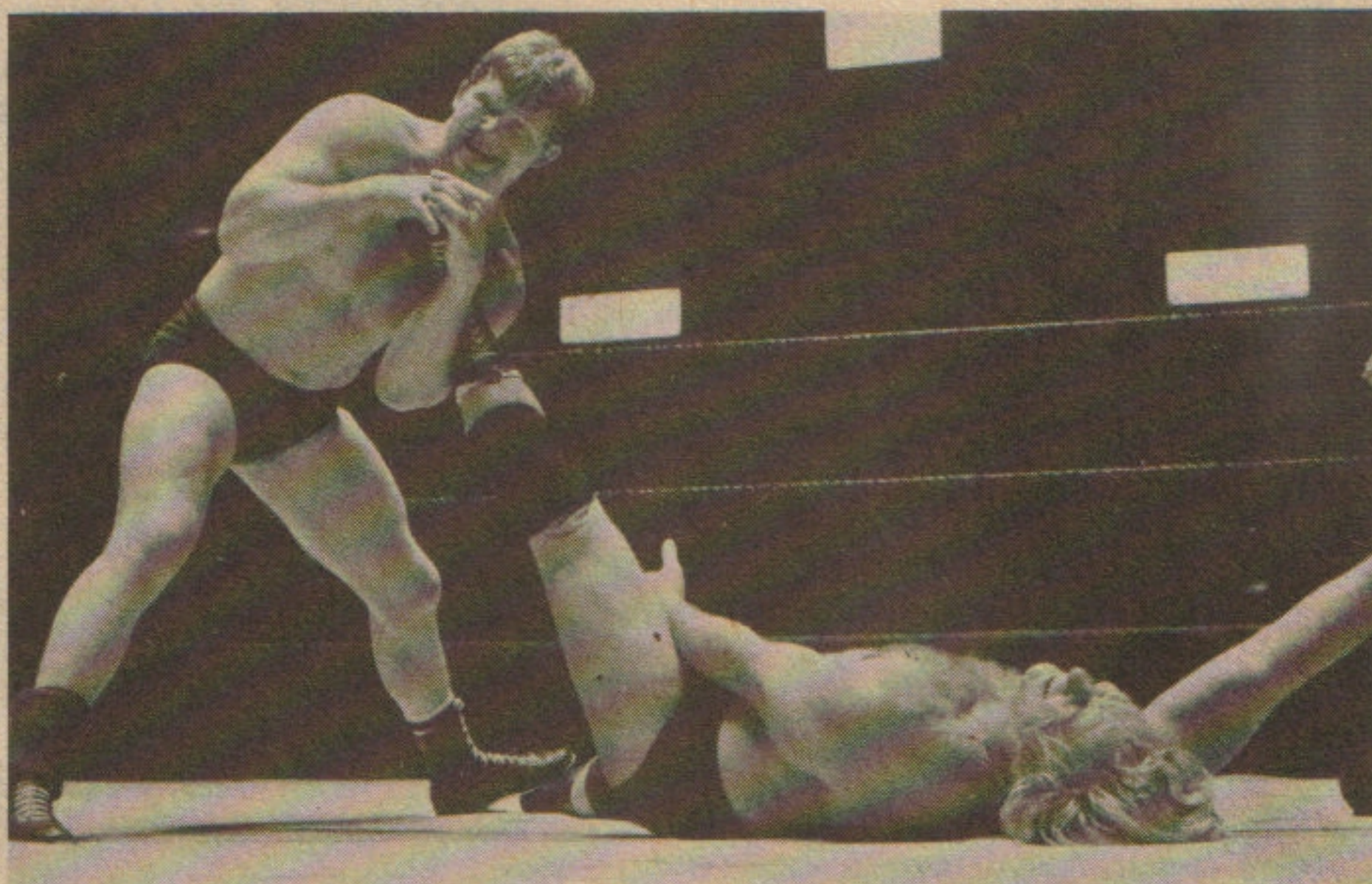
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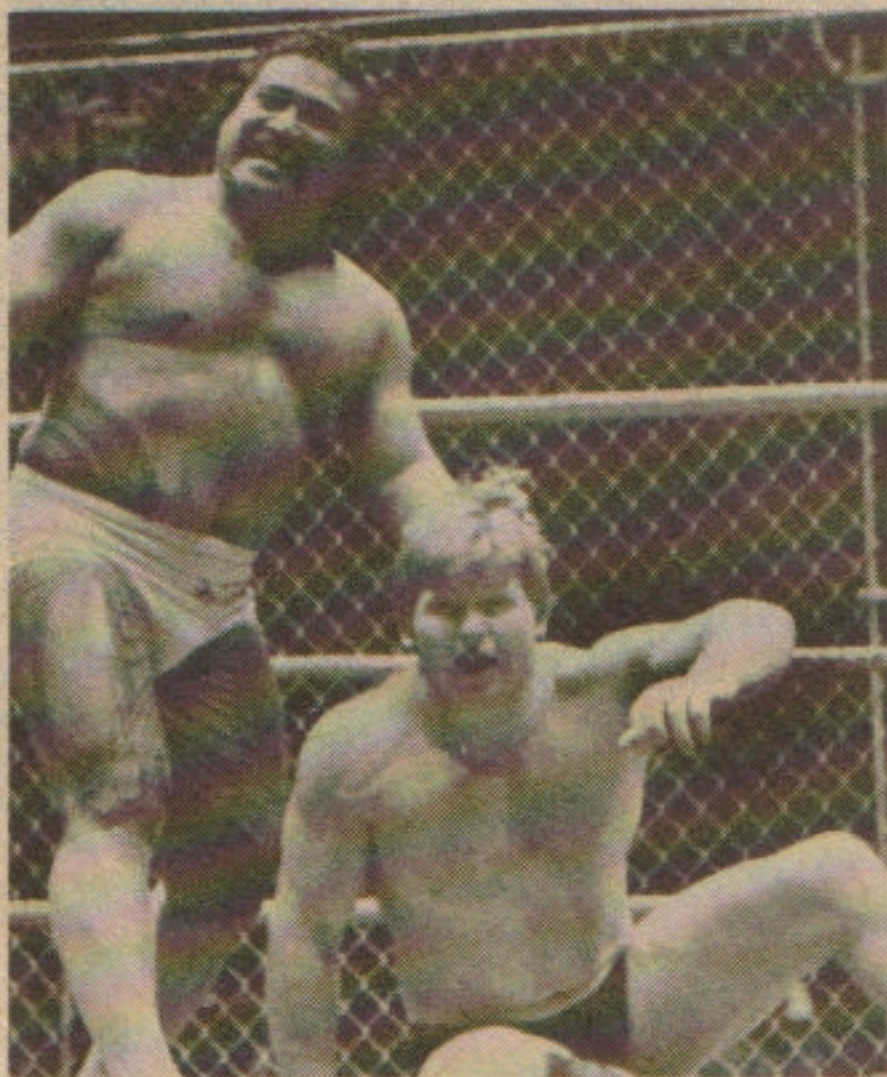
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BACKLUND

(Continued from Page 35)



Backlund's clash with AWA champion Nick Bockwinkel (above) resulted in a hard-fought draw. When Peter Maivia came to the WWF, he and Backlund became close friends. It didn't last, however. Bob battles Maivia in a steel cage (below left). Former WWF champion Ivan Koloff found that Backlund was not about to return the belt (below right).



He doesn't get up until the next morning.

When he does arise, his shoulder hurts only slightly less but his ankle seems fine. He showers, then heads for the gym. There he exercises for two hours. He follows a strict exercise regimen. When it's over, he mentally checks his body. His shoulder still hurts, but everything else is working well. It's about what he expected.

That night, another wrestler battles the match of his life against Backlund. The man has

been training all his life for this chance. Bob manages once again to turn back the challenge. He leaves the arena still WWF champion.

Yet, it's impossible to determine how much damage has been done to Backlund's body. Once a perfect physical specimen, Bob's body shows the ravages of the title years. The once fluid grace is now broken down to sharper, harsher movements. His sense of celebration is gone; in its place exists a cold profession-

alism. He's no longer a young grappler propelled to the top. He's a champion with no illusion. The most important thing in his life is to protect his belt. There's nothing fun about it.

It's taken two years for the transformation of Bob Backlund. The boyishness is gone, lost somewhere in sweat and blood. Even for veterans, a title reign is an exhausting, agonizing ordeal. For Backlund, a man with few years experience, it is a brutalizing trial unequalled in professional sports. Many assumed Backlund would have lost the title long before this. His reign has been a superhuman effort.

How long can he continue? Do the fans have the right to ask him to defend his title still another time? How much longer can he survive? No one knows the answers to these questions. Time will tell us soon enough.

It's no secret that Backlund's friends have been begging him to take it easy. They regularly plead with him to take a long vacation. Some are even asking him to surrender the belt and go on to other, less demanding tasks. Bob listens to them, but his eyes glaze over. He cannot and will not leave the title. It will have to be taken from him by force.

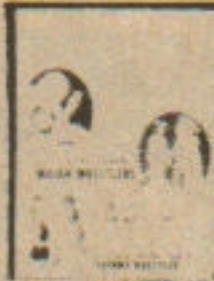






There is never a lack of men ready to take the title by force. The most dangerous men in the sport are anxious for the chance. Some have already had their chance to batter Backlund's body. Others are struggling to get a match. Backlund waits for them all.

Whether or not Bob Backlund should take it easy is an interesting question. However, it's meaningless. Backlund won't take it easy. The championship has transformed him. The boy has become a man. ☐

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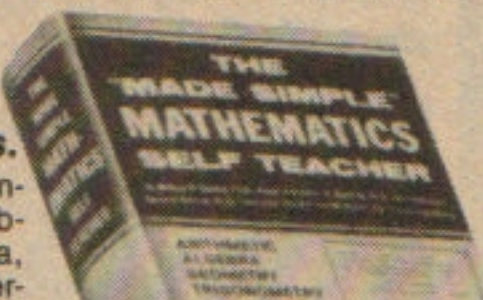
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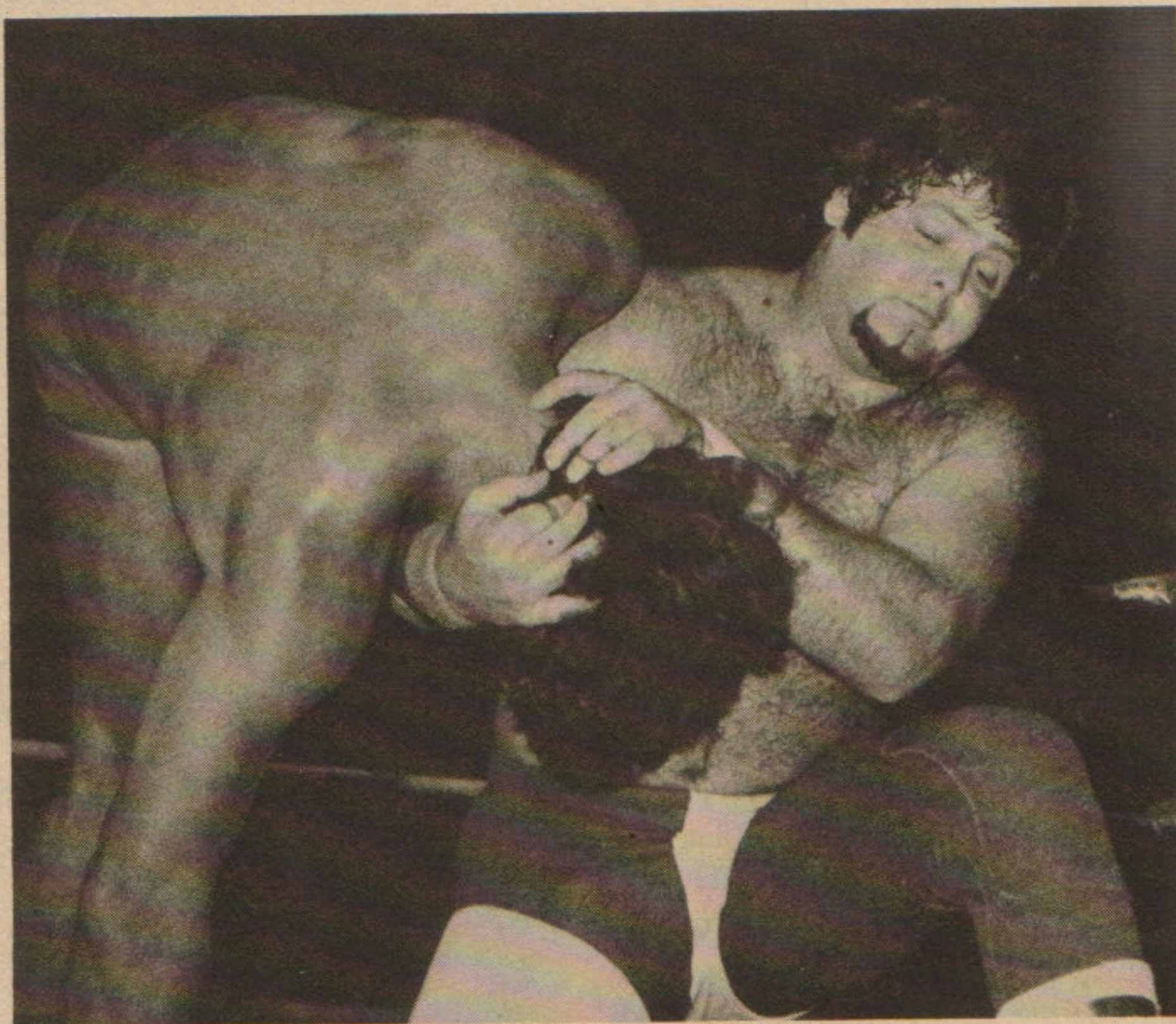
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ON THE ROAD

(Continued from Page 8)



"I cooked up some Australian stew and invited the boys over to plot strategy. We agreed that we'd take on Lawler one at a time, but one of us would always be present at ringside in case Lawler brought one of his goons in to interfere. We're gonna make sure the matches are kept clean," said Dundee.

To prevent discord, each of the members were free to wrestle Lawler any way he wished.

"Bruiser wanted to rip off Lawler's ears and hang them from his belt," said Dundee, chuckling. "Bobo wanted to coco butt Lawler's head into a thin pancake while Brockwinkel wanted to snap his mind with psychic maneuvers. Me, I just wanted to ruin his career. Nothin' fancy, just a plain old bloodbath. Kiss Lawler goodbye, gang, he's finished."

Not surprisingly, Lawler remains arrogantly unperturbed by all these challenges.

"If I were being challenged by

If Bobo Brazil, Bruiser, and Nick Bockwinkel have their way, Lawler will soon be out of the sport. The man who wants Lawler most, though, is his former partner, Bill Dundee.

anyone who knew how to wrestle, well, maybe I'd be a little worried," said Lawler. "But they're a collection of morons and has-beens. How can I take an old bum like Bruiser seriously? I mean, he can't lace his shoes by himself.

"Bobo Brazil is half-blind by mental disease and Brockwinkel is the biggest coward goin'. That leaves Dundee. I got a personal score to settle with Dundee," said Lawler, his voice soft and ominous. "I want to show him you can't cut Jerry Lawler and get away with it."

Long after Brazil, Bruiser, and Brockwinkel are gone, Bill Dundee and Jerry Lawler will be left alone to settle their feud. That thought chilled me as I headed toward the Midwest to investigate a shocking incident in America's heartland. □

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BEHIND THE DOOR

(Continued from Page 10)

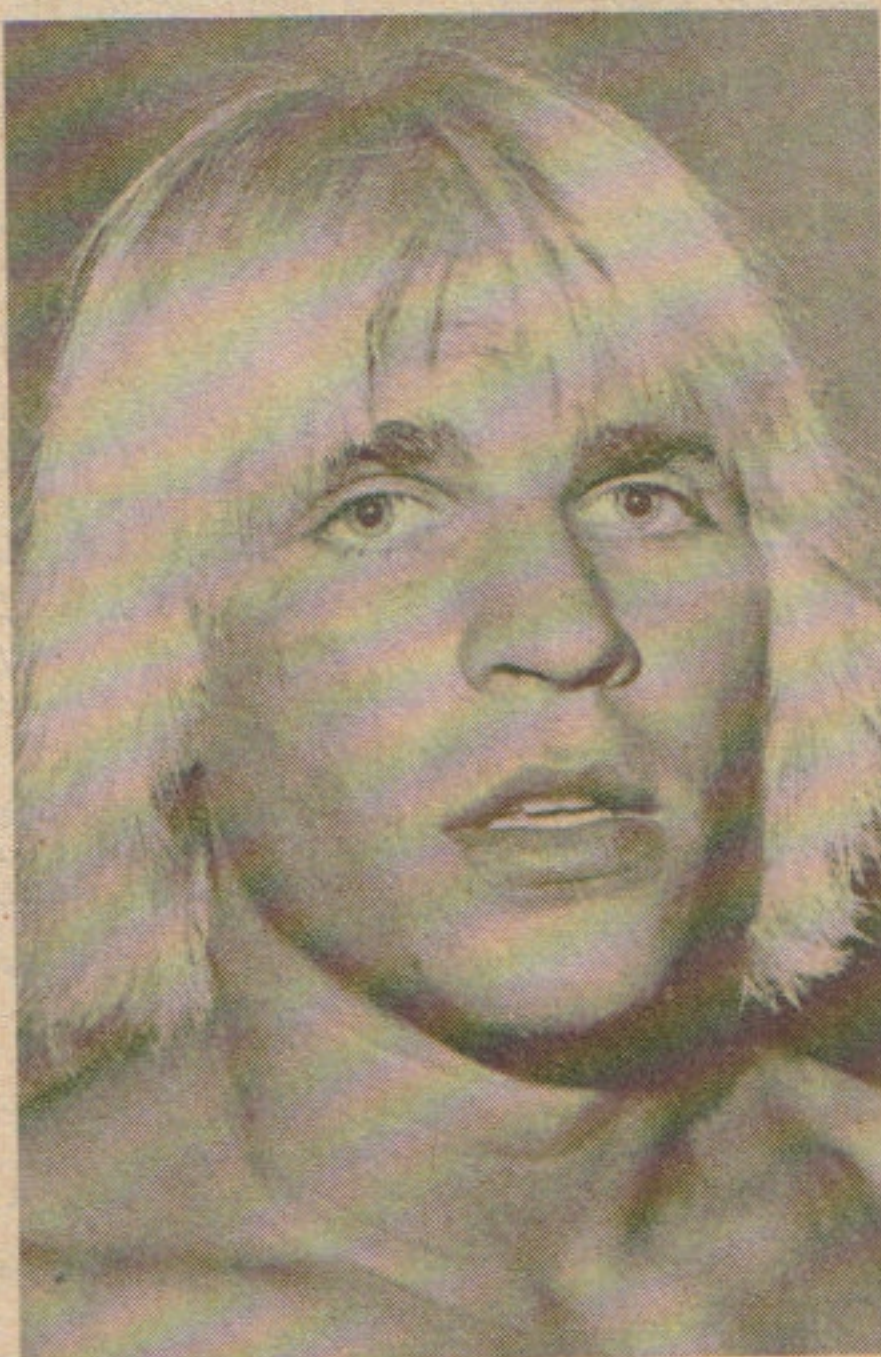
you are best qualified to write."

"What's up?"

"Well you know Tommy Rich lost the Georgia title. I hate to say it, but he's retiring from wrestling."

"No," I said. "Can't be. Tommy's certainly not a quitter."

I got to the office by 11. Peter told me that I should try to get Rich on the phone and get the story. He knew I was a close friend of Tommy's and that I might be able to bring his true feeling to the surface.



Tommy Rich seriously considered retirement following his controversial loss of the Georgia heavyweight title to Masked Superstar.

I didn't want to write about Tommy Rich retiring from wrestling. "Pete," I said, "if I could talk to him in person, I'm sure I would do a much better job. I could probably get a flight out this afternoon, see him tonight, and file the story by phone."

"Sounds good," Peter said. "But make sure you have the story to me by tomorrow noon at the latest."

Immediately upon arriving in Atlanta, I called Rich at his apartment. He wasn't there, but

assuming what kind of mood he might be in, I knew just where to find him.

Tommy was sitting by himself at the Peach Tree Tavern. I tapped him on the shoulder and he turned around and greeted me with his normal Tommy Rich smile. "How many have you had, partner?" I asked him.

"Six, kid," he replied. "But don't worry, it's only 7-Up."

We both laughed. "What brings you to Atlanta," he asked.

"Well," I said, "I'm here to do a story on your retirement, but I'm not going to do it."

"I'm serious about this," he replied. "You weren't here when I lost the title to Masked Superstar. You know I'm not a complainer, but if you saw the way he beat me... there's just no reward in this sport for abiding by the rules. How could I stay in a sport where evil is encouraged as the route to success? No sir, I'm getting out."

I didn't really have an answer for him. I gazed out the window of the bar and I noticed a long line forming for the next Friday's wrestling card at the Omni. "Look at that line, Tommy," I said. "What do you notice?"

"Looks like it's going to be a pretty good crowd," he said.

"Not only that," I said cutting him off. "Look at all those kids. Do you realize what would happen if every good man in wrestling decided to quit. The entire sport would be taken over by rulebreakers. Wrestling wouldn't be wrestling anymore. And all those kids—they would need somebody to root for. They would have to choose between the rulebreakers. Fine example they would set."

Tommy looked at me, smiled, and shook my hand. "Bartender," he shouted, "pour this man a 7-Up." □

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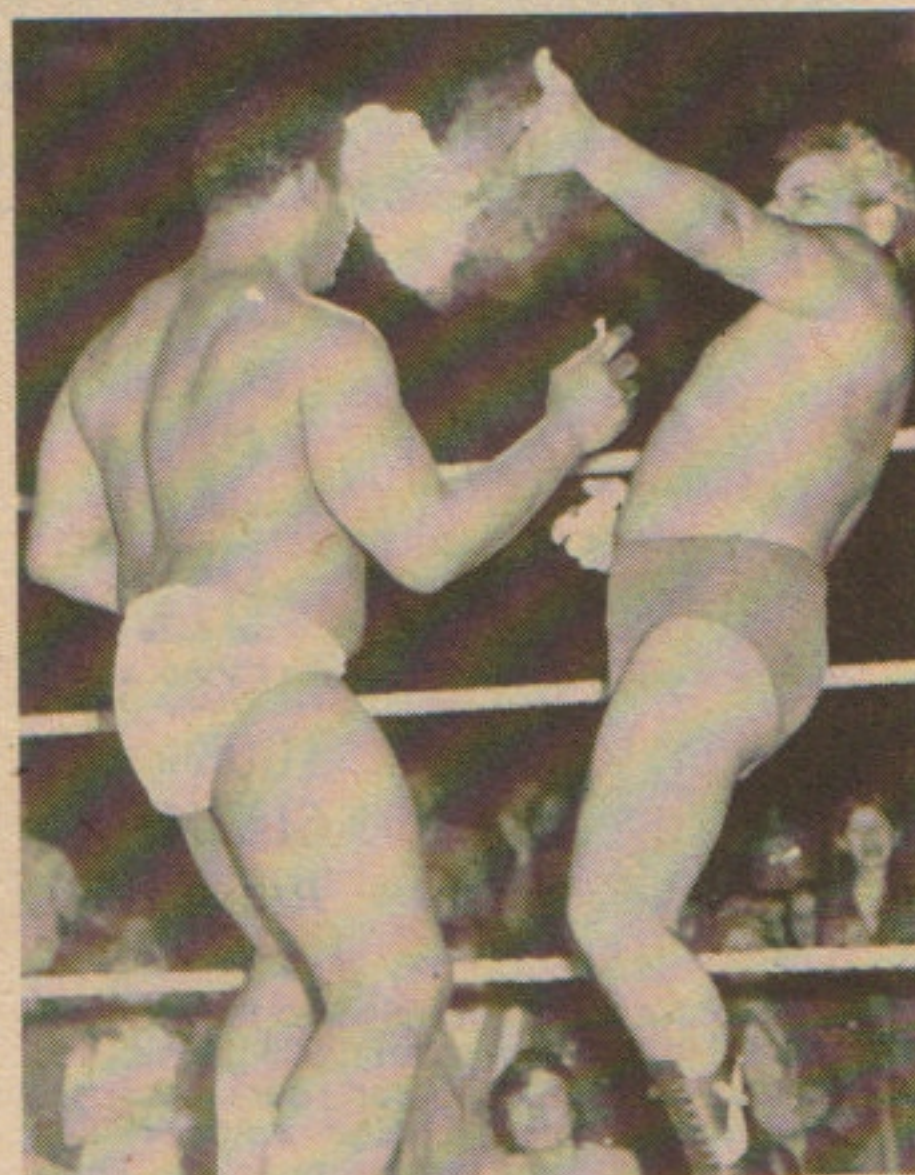
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THE INSIDER

(Continued from Page 12)

No one outside of wrestling would comment on the Sheik's hideous maneuver. Hopefully, they will help stop the demonic rulebreaker when and if the time comes. Meanwhile, let us all kneel down and pray. For the sake of mankind.



The Sheik lets his fire fly and another opponent is seriously injured.

RUMOR VS. FACT

RUMOR: Mr. Wrestling II has made a vow that if he does not run Masked Superstar out of Georgia in the next six months, he will retire from professional wrestling!

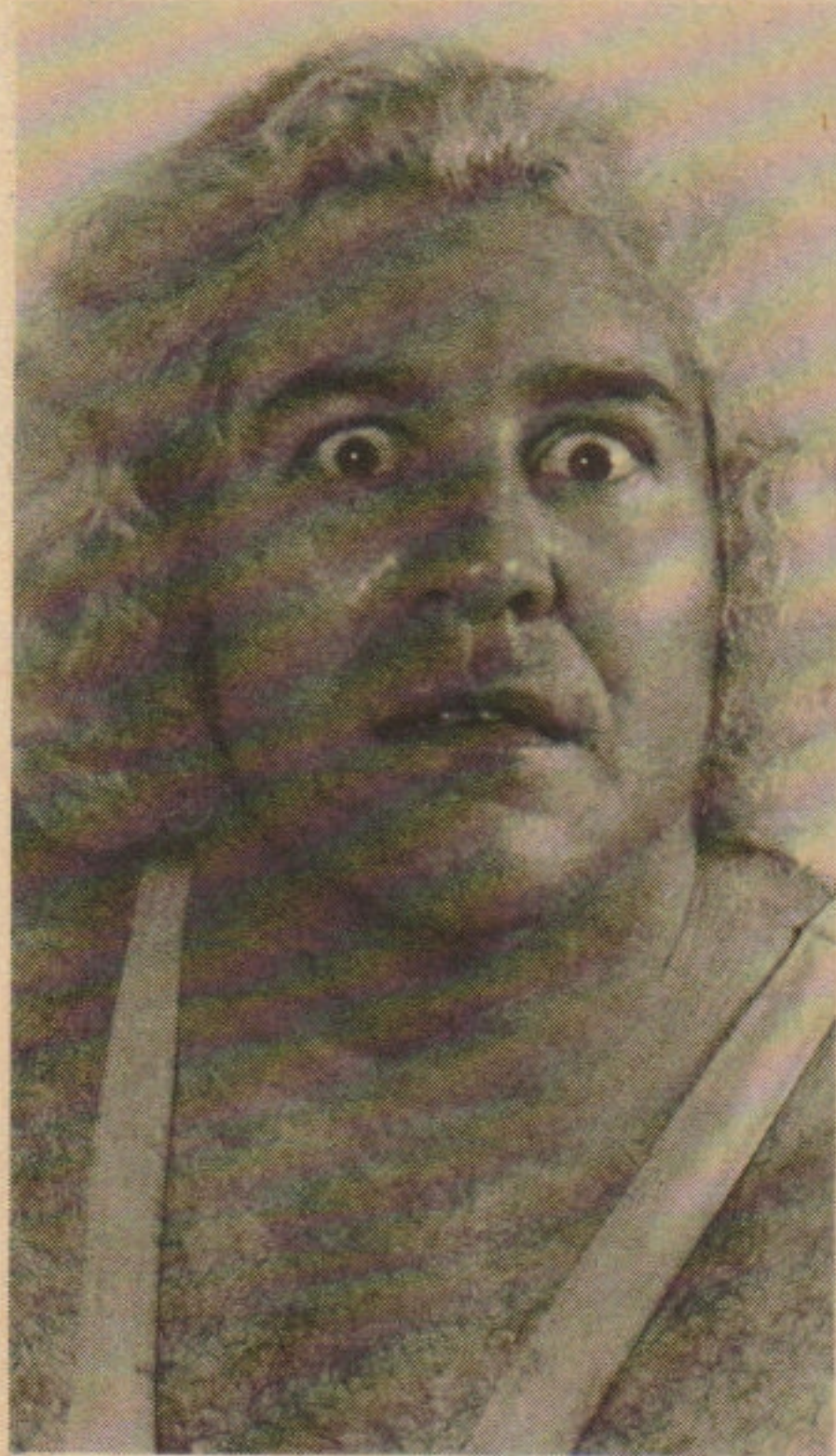
FACT: Those special few who are close to II admit that the scientific star is obsessed with ridding the state of Masked Superstar. But they will not say that II will retire if Masked Superstar remains.

"II will not be a happy man until Masked Superstar makes his ugly living somewhere else," an Atlanta observer revealed. "I wouldn't go as far as to say that II will quit the sport he loves over it, though. But if Masked Superstar is the Georgia state champion six months from now, I wouldn't be surprised to see II hang up his mask for good."

INJURY REPORT

Good news from the Mid-Atlantic are. RICK STEAMBOAT has fully recovered from the leg injury he sustained while battling BARON VON RASCHKE, PAUL JONES and JOHN STUDD. Steamboat plans to quickly gain revenge.

A bad case of the flu is circulating throughout the



Ken Patera has been limited to 50 percent efficiency while suffering from the flu. He hopes to be fully recovered when he wrestles for the WWF championship.

WWF, and several wrestlers have caught the bug. Rule-breaking strongman KEN PATERA is among those who have been weakened.

"Ken has been wrestling at 50 percent for the past two weeks, and nobody even noticed," said manager GRAND WIZARD. "That just goes to show you how awesome Patera is. For one match, he had to be dragged out of bed. He had a 102-degree temperature, and he felt weak and nauseous. And he still destroyed the pig they matched him with."

That's it for this month. Catch you later. □

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TOMMY RICH

(Continued from Page 37)

Heenan had a long-term contract to manage and wrestle in Georgia. He had no way of getting out of that contract. Unless he was thrown out of the state.

When Heenan learned that Funk was ill, he immediately seized upon this opportunity. If his contract were voided, there would be no lingering problems with having to fly back to Georgia on a regular basis to fulfill contractual obligations.

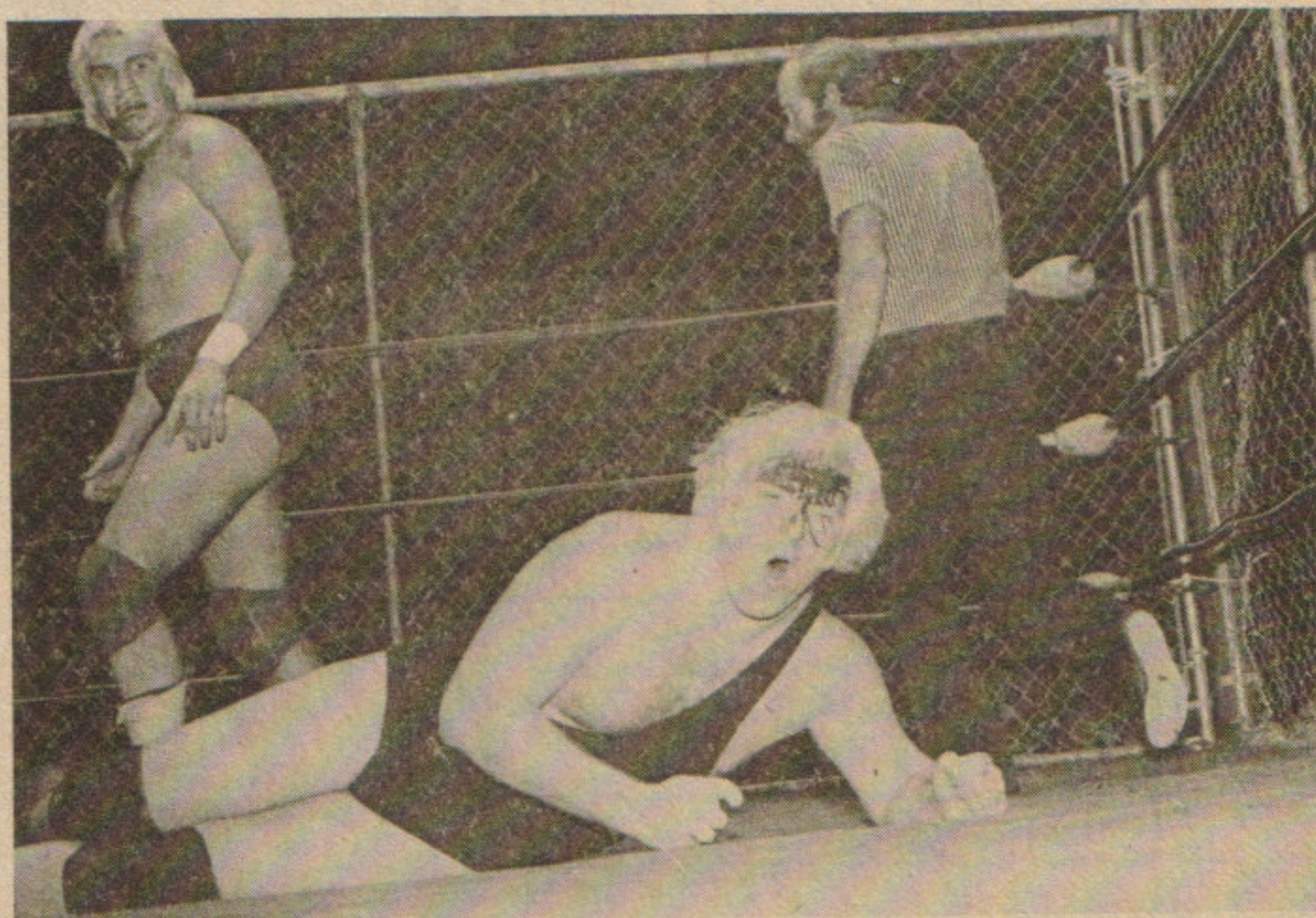
But Rich had no way of knowing that. All he wanted was revenge.

"Yeah, sweet revenge," said Rich.

But Heenan is not motivated by mortal ambitions. Another man might have wanted to lose quickly and cleanly. Heenan had no intention of losing quickly. Or cleanly. Or losing at all.

"I want the kid's head on a pike to carry around with me as a memento," snickered Heenan.

The ending has already been



Bobby Heenan bled profusely from the forehead after being run repeatedly into the steel cage by Tommy Rich (above). Heenan, being interviewed in Georgia by Gordon Solie, is accompanied by his former stable of wrestlers Blackjack Lanza, Masked Superstar, and Killer Kox (below).



detailed. What remains is the reaction, from fans in the AWA and from the remnants of Heenan's family.

"I don't want the AWA fans to hate me," said Rich. "If they want, I'll come into the AWA and wipe Heenan's face off his head. Then everything would be square. How was I to know he wanted out of Georgia?"

There's no hard feeling between Heenan and the men he left behind.

"Bobby's always been fair and square with me," said Karl Kox. "I wish him the very best of luck."

"Heenan is a genius," said



Heenan is now back in the AWA and accompanies champion Nick Bockwinkel on a television interview. Nick appears to be revitalized with Heenan back as his manager.

Masked Superstar.

Thus the sinister tale of Bobby Heenan continues. Somehow, he manages to escape disaster after disaster and turn it into personal gain. He was banished from the AWA and found a home in Georgia, where he swiftly organized a powerful family. Then opportunity presents itself and he returns to the AWA, back at Bockwinkel's side.

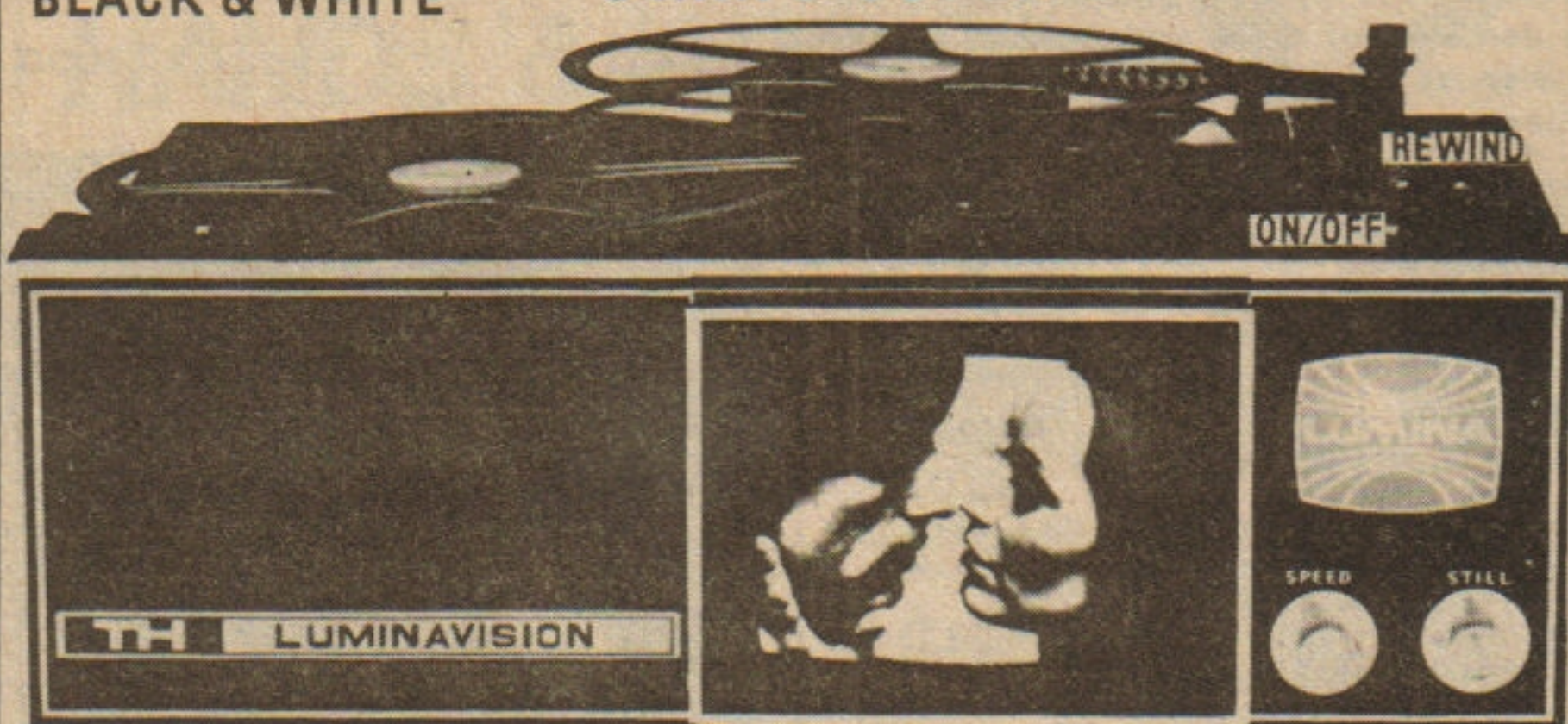
At some point, Heenan will overstep or miscalculate. But not right now. He must be given his proper credit. Whatever his goals, he is successful. □

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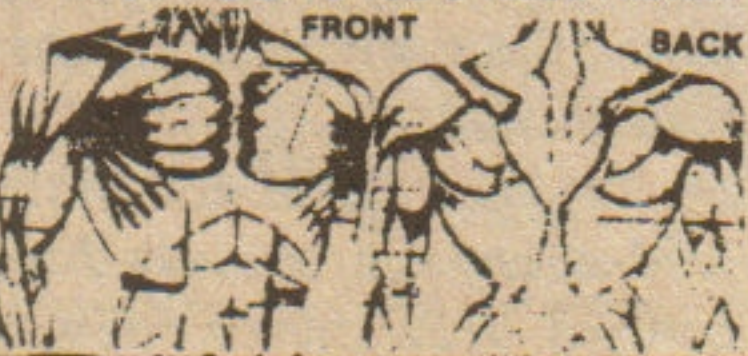
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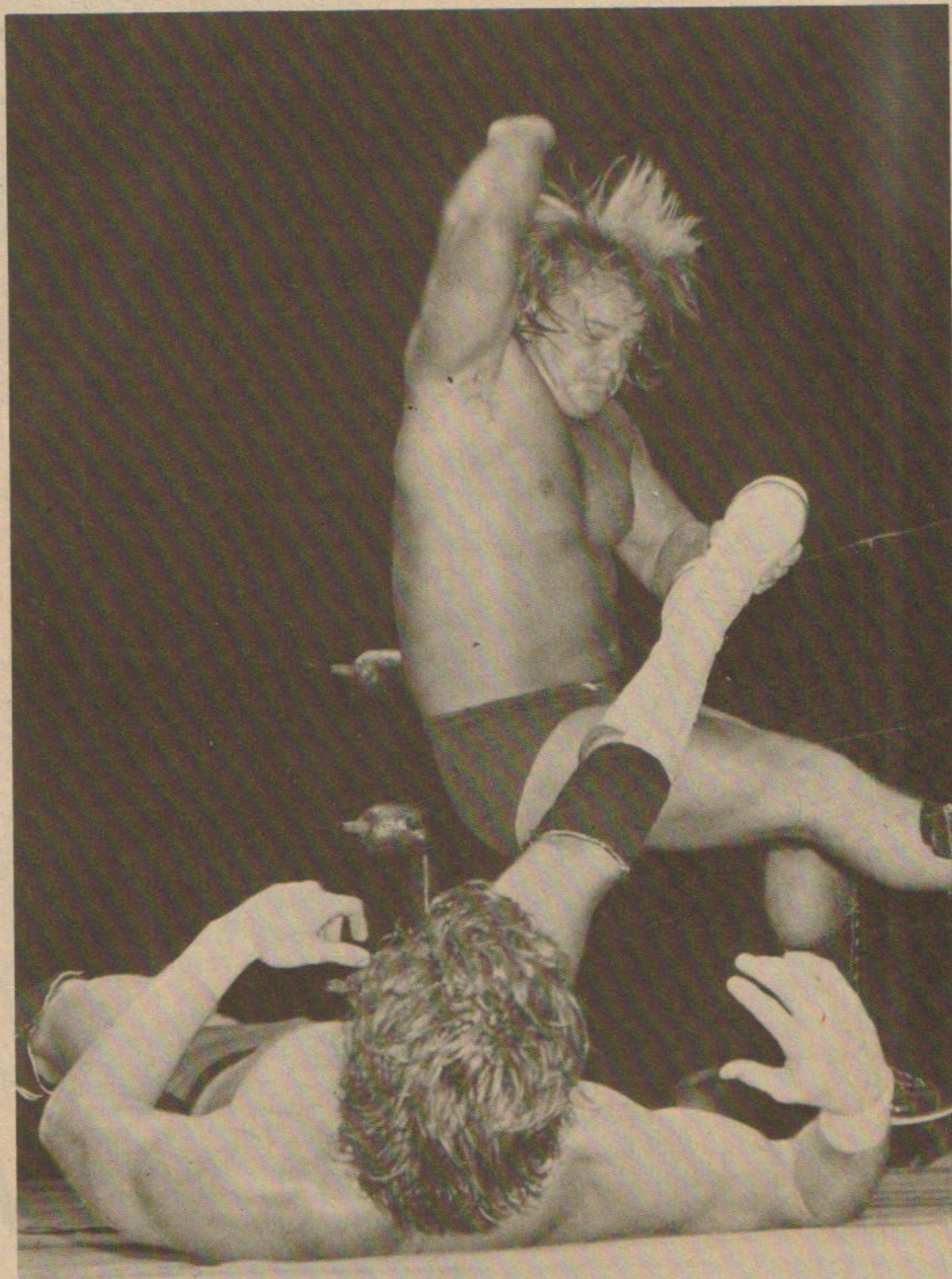
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ONE ON ONE

(Continued from Page 39)



Valentine's elbow smash used to win matches for the Flair-Valentine team. Now Greg hopes to use it on Ric. Valentine had fully expected to convert Flair back into a rulebreaker when he returned to the Mid-Atlantic and he was furious when he found out he could not.

area is turnin' bad. Now you got a lot of goons to count on and bail you out when you're in trouble. But when you had to really fight, when the odds were against you, you split. More than anything, I can't respect that.

GV: So Ric Flair, great god of the Mid-Atlantic area, says I'm a coward. Well, there's one way

to settle this.

RF: Yeah, I heard you been bad-mouthing me.

GV: Tell me what I said, I forgot.

RF: That I'm-soft.

GV: That's right, chump. Maybe you'd like to meet in an alley somewhere.

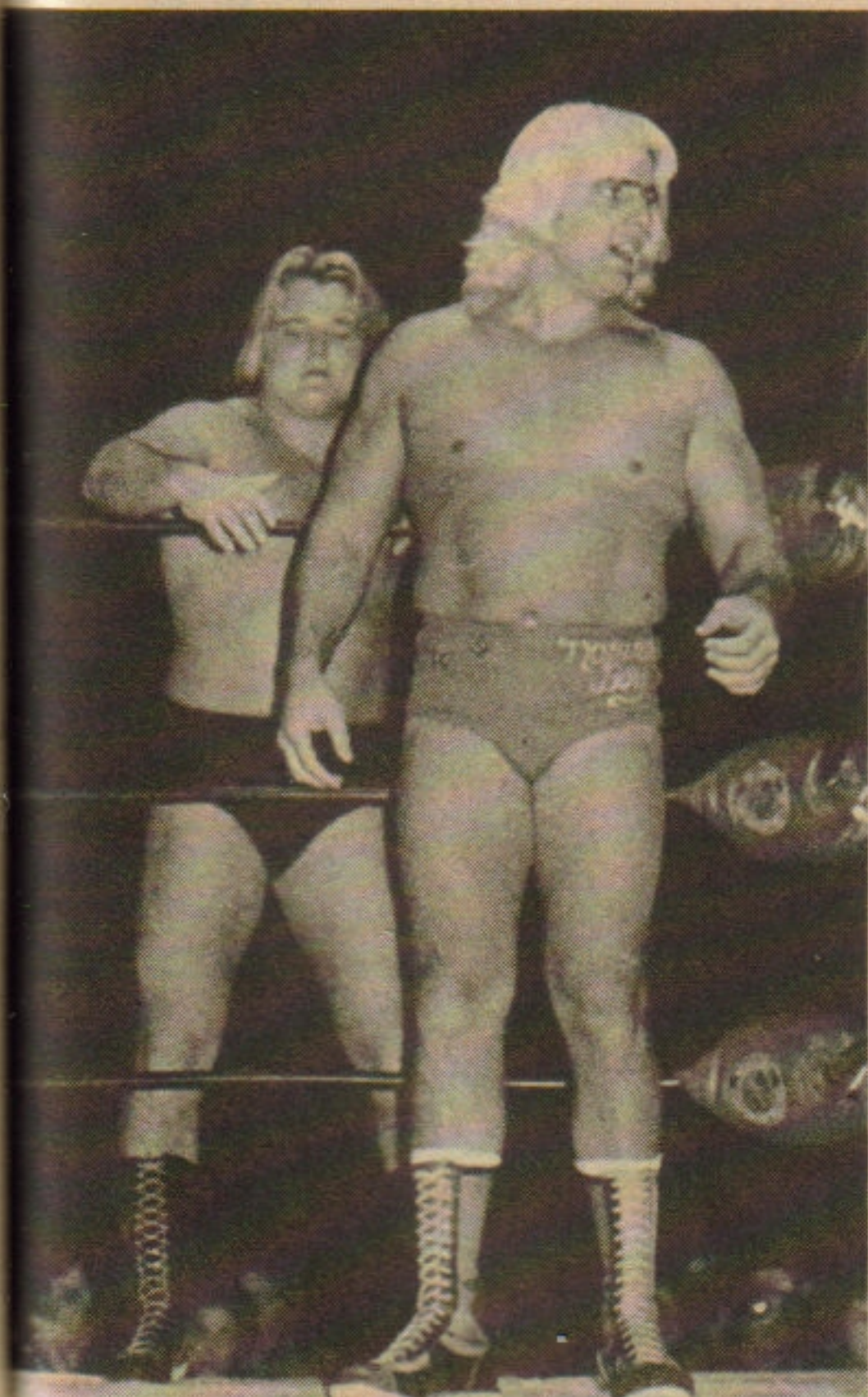
RF: You gonna have your bum friend Ray Stevens around to bail you out?

GV: I don't need no one to help me, man. Talk about needin' dudes. Why don't you and Steamboat get together with me and Ray somewhere? Oh, sorry, Ricky can't stay out after seven. Past his bedtime.

RF: Why don't you say that to Steamboat's face?

GV: Good. Tell him to come down and turn around.

RF: You're a brave bum with a telephone wire separatin' us. You'll run and scream like a banshee as soon as I come into the ring.



Valentine reaches out to tag Flair as the two battled Wahoo McDaniel and Rufus R. Jones in January 1977. They are now literally at each others throats.

GV: Anytime lame.

RF: Punk. You came back 'cause you got no where else to go. They drove you out of the WWF and now you're comin' lookin' for charity. No way, turkey. I'll ram your skull into the post and send you back home.

GV: Name the date.

RF: Anytime, chump, anytime. ☐

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